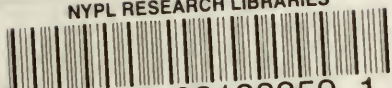


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# HEART WHISPERS;

OR,

## A Peep Behind the Family Curtain,

INTERSPERSED WITH SKETCHES OF A TOUR THROUGH  
NINE SOUTHERN STATES.

CONTAINED

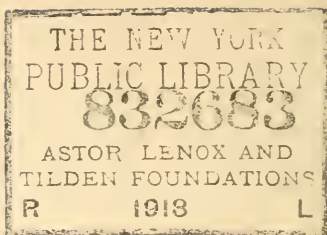
IN A SERIES OF LETTERS TO HIS WIFE.

BY WILLIAM ATSON,

FORMERLY OF MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE.

MEMPHIS:  
CLEAVES & VADEN.

1859.



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Entered, according to Act of Congress, in the year 1859, by

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MEARS & DUSENBERRY, STEREOTYPERS.

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SMITH & PETERS, PRINTERS.

THESE

Heart Whispers

ARE

PRAYERFULLY PRESENTED

BY

"A NON-PROFESSING" AND FREE-THINKING  
COSMOPOLITE

TO

WOMAN AND TO MAN,

HOPING THEY WILL INSPIRE THE LATTER WITH A MORE DELICATE  
HOME CHIVALRY,

AND

CHARM BOTH INTO THE PRACTICE OF A MORE HUMANE AND  
PLEASANT PHILOSOPHY,

A MORE CHEERFUL AND CHARITABLE CHRISTIANITY.





## INTRODUCTORY.

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MEMPHIS, Tenn., October 21, 1856.

JONATHAN PUBLIC, Esq.,

DEAR SIR:—If you condescend to notice at all the little book herewith forwarded you, your first inquiry will probably be, “What reasons induced you to present it to me?” To save you the trouble of racking your mighty brain, or opening your august mouth, I will tell you in advance. I present you this book, because it was written to cheer my wife and benefit my children; and, as our families are very similar in dispositions and tastes, I thought it might cheer your wife and benefit your children. Many of the latter, with all their fondness for “hyflutin” and humbuggery, love the simple, the natural, and the true; and, in the language of Dickens, “From my own observation of the chances and changes of life I am inclined to think that every man, provided he can make up his mind to speak the truth, simply and plainly, has it in his power to contribute something out of his own experience, which may add in a greater or less degree to our

general knowledge of human nature in its almost infinite varieties. In my own case my contribution may be the merest mite, but as anything is better than keeping even my poor farthingworth of information selfishly to myself, I will take a bold step and cast it forthwith as modestly as may be into the general public store."

Satisfied with this general defence of my presumption, you may then inquire, "Why, sir, in presuming to present these letters to me, did you not dress them in a fine style, erase the commonplace, and systematize your political and theological theories?" Had I done so, dear Mr. Public, my book would not have contained the heart whispers of an affectionate husband to a loving wife, but instead thereof would have been filled with cold and polished addresses to your honourable self by a money-loving or fame-seeking scribbler. So many of this sort are imposing their offerings upon you at this time, I really hoped you would be pleased at something, out of the laced-up, corset-board, artificial line.

To bring the matter home, allow me, oh King of American sovereigns, to ask, Do you dress up your letters to your wife in a fine style? Do you address her in a continuously elegant strain? Do you use no commonplace or conversational terms? Do you systematize into logical treatises your political and religious theories? Or do you simply permit your thoughts to slip out without constraint, and pen them without regard to order,

being surprised if the blotted page contains anything worthy of perusal?

Tell the truth, "old fellow,"—would you not deny the *reality* of these letters, and accuse me, you old scoundrel, of having manufactured them specially *for you*, had they been written with a systematic and elegant accuracy?

To your good Lady, who may doubt my ability to write in this manner, please present a copy of "The Vision," and inform her that I am its author.

Oblige me by requesting your metaphysical son, who may suppose from the *plainness* of my writing that I am deficient in *profundity*, not to propagate this opinion until he peruses my forthcoming work on "The Psychology of Creation," which will "knock the black out" of Emerson and Carlyle; and be so *profound* that the Devil himself can't understand it. To the silly members of your family, who may declare they can learn nothing from my book, say "*the author foresaw that result.*" The silly are always self-conceited; and self-conceit is a great stupifier even of strong intellects.

To the sensible and good-hearted, who think they see intended kindness in my severest criticisms, and good seed gathered from the common-place details of practical life, garnered in every simple fact recorded on every simple page, return my thanks, and tell them, *for their sakes*, I resisted the temptation to "fix up" these letters,

to convert this natural and real into an artificial and fictitious record, this work of the heart into one of the head.

“This is all very satisfactory,” you may reply, “provided ‘The Vision’ comes up to my wife’s ideas of elegant composition, and ‘The Psychology of Creation’ is as profound as you assert it to be; but what defence can you offer for your critiques on the churches, your political diatribes, and your personalities?”

Can it be possible any church will be so bigoted as to murmur at the gentle chidings of a friend?

Can it be possible that a great political party, in the zenith of its power, will be so weak as to fear the disconnected whisperings of a husband to his wife?

With regard to personalities I merely say, whenever you find any living private person, whose cheeks these whispers legitimately tinge with a blush, inform me, and I will explain, if necessary, why I fooled you only on one point.

I do not think the exhibition of these letters to you will lessen your high opinion of Mrs. Atson, though she fears the discovery that she was so weak as to marry a man who is foolish enough to think her the greatest woman in the world will have this effect.

As to the little Atsons—

Alice, Willie,  
Anna, Nellie,



—they are my sweet property; and though the living ones are too young to regard your opinion, I hope you will seek their acquaintance, admire their innocent countenances, fall in love with their pleasant ways, remember them hereafter with deep affection, and be ever ready to protect them, *and those like them*, with your strong arms and potent influence.

To relieve the demands of my extreme conscientiousness, it may not be amiss to state that, in saying I have not “fixed up” the accompanying letters, I do not mean to deny that in copying them for you and yours I have crossed the t’s, dotted the i’s, omitted the beautiful blotches that adorn the original manuscripts, and made a few other immaterial alterations. I have taken this liberty with the originals partly for the purpose of enabling good readers to read them aloud without difficulty. Collected together thus, they constitute *a family book*; and I thought some parents in your great *family* might possibly prefer that those assembled after tea, around *the family* fireside, should listen even to their dry details, rather than waste the long evening in dreamy idleness, silly talk, or slanderous gossip.

Should there be any such parents, I would suggest the propriety of banishing on such occasions all confirmed old bachelors.

In nothing has Providence displayed more beneficence than in endowing good husbands and good fathers with

*a conjugal and a parental sense, by which they detect peculiar charms in their wives and in their children.* I, you will perceive, possess these senses to a wonderful degree. Confirmed old bachelors being utterly destitute of them, could not possibly comprehend or appreciate the discoveries I have made relative to the dear objects of my affection, and would chill the glow of these conjugal and paternal effusions by their presence, even though they should withhold their sceptical surmises, idiotic sneers, and senseless criticisms.

With these explanations and suggestions, I yield to your consideration and keeping these delicate breathings of my soul.

Yours respectfully,

WILLIAM ATSON.



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## PART I.

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MISSISSIPPI. NEW ORLEANS. TEXAS. MEMPHIS.



## LETTER I.

JACKSON, Miss., December 20, 1855.

DEAR MOLLY :—I do not intend to write you a letter to-night. Stage-travelling and letter-writing are not at all compatible. With the exception of a little rest at Columbus, I have been moving day and night. I started at 6 o'clock yesterday morning for this place, and have been tossing up hill and down, until I reached the cars, twelve and a half miles from here, this afternoon.

I would not write at all now, but I do not wish you to be in suspense. To-morrow night I shall be on the Magnolia, and then after resting, I can collect my wandering thoughts and centre them upon home, children, wife. It is not however for the want of thoughts about you all that I do not proceed. They throng in abundance about me. "Beauty," Anna, Alice, yourself—your images are all before me. They inspire me as I travel. They stimulate me to go forward. They make pleasing the prospect of my return. Physical indisposition arising from fatigue, and the want of time, are the real reasons which induce me to forego the pleasure of pleasing you by a long talk on paper.

Kiss the children for me; excuse me for disappointing you; and accept afresh love no less ardent and much deeper and

more durable, than that of the honeymoon, from your affectionate husband,

WILLIAM ATSON.



## LETTER II.

A feeble attempt to journalize a letter.—A fact.—Fiction.—Truth.—The stage.—Old Times.—Miss Molly Murray.—Marrying a poor girl.

VICKSBURG, December 21, 1855.

DEAR MOLLY:—(Dec. 12.) Having finished an offering sacred to friendship, written sundry business letters, arranged my papers, and “packed up” for a long journey, arose early, ate breakfast, kissed and rekindled wife and children, and told the servants “good-bye,” I mounted a mule and rode to the station. There I bade farewell to Billy, and jumped on the cars as soon as they arrived.

On them I found \* \* \* several friends. These soon “got off,” leaving me without any acquaintance but Kendall. Just as we were arriving at Saulsbury, I embraced a private opportunity to tell him the only way to cure a disease or settle a difficulty was to remove the cause; that Mrs. D. was perfectly honest, did not understand deceit or trickery, and could never respect him, or her young son, unless the suspicion of deliberate treachery on their part were removed from her mind; that the fact that the deed was done in a hurry and not deliberately, being begun and consummated in one day, would tend greatly to exculpate the beloved boy, but that she understood him to have promised her not to take advantage of her hospitality and

his association with her son to induce him to enlist for Nicaragua. He admitted having made the promise, said he originally designed fulfilling it, and would have notified her of his change of intention, but for the hurry produced by the expected departure of the volunteers.

I am willing to view this matter charitably. I do not think Kendall did what he regarded at the time as an unjustifiable violation of a solemn and sacred contract—a contract which entered into, and took hold of the sensitive fibres of a mother's heart. I do not believe he thought he was doing a mean thing; and a man should never be considered mean until he deliberately commits what he himself believes to be a mean act: I still think he is a clever fellow and intends to do right. But I am sorry he made the contract, and still more sorry that he violated it. With a knowledge of this circumstance I could not wholly trust him. I couldn't, to use the most expressive phrase ever invented to describe complete trustworthiness, "tie to him." I fear I shall *never* be able to regard him as one of those men who can put their back against the rock of truth, and say to temptation's army—

"Come one, come all, this rock shall fly  
From its firm base as soon as I."

These are the only sort of men or women I esteem; and the only sort that will do "to tie to." It sometimes irritates me when your self-respect and quiet firmness comes into collision with my views or wishes. But with what contempt should I regard you, if I supposed you did not possess sufficient firmness to enable you to resist any temptation to deliberate

error? Those little chaps, the dear pledges of our mutual love, cling, I think, with unusual affection to their father, not that he is any better than other fathers, or loves his more than they love their offspring; but because he shows his affection more clearly by those little attentions that touch the heart of childhood much more sensibly than the sacrifice of health, honesty, happiness, which so many parents make, in order to procure riches for their children or transmit them a name bright with the lustre of fame. Well, I wish you to tell our little brats, not simply once, but to instill and reinstill it into them until they realize the idea, that if after they become somewhat older they do deliberately a mean thing, and fail to make prompt and complete retraction or restitution, their father will not attempt to punish them for it in any way—he will merely lose all confidence in and all affection for them. To come back to the point—if charity aided by experience and reason forces me to take the foregoing view of K.'s conduct, is there any probability that he can ever fully gain the confidence and affection of a lady, who values honesty as highly as myself, but has not profited by experience, and does not mix much reason with her reflections?

It is, however, very bad policy for her to refuse to be reconciled, so far at least as to permit association between her family and the offending son and brother. She should punish him with kindness. An opposite course will materially injure her in the eyes of the community, indicate nothing good in her own heart, and give her "bright-eyed boy" an excuse for any failure he may ultimately make, or any bad habits he may finally acquire.



Left the cars at Saulsbury, and "took the stage." The change revived many an old reminiscence. Long years have passed since I travelled in the stage. I have generally followed the main routes, and comfortably ensconced myself in steam-palaces, or been whirled along by the iron-horse. The up-hill and the down-hill motions with all the jolting variations, the three-mile-an-hour gait, the familiarity of strangers, the pleasantness and the unpleasantness of the former mode of travelling, carried me back to a past era of my life—to the time when I was a rollicking, joyous youth, who could laugh as loudly, as heartily as, and—so everybody said—an honester laugh, than any one else; and joke and take a joke as well as the hardest face, unless I thought some surly scamp meant more than he said; and then could "get mad" as quick as the most irascible, and whether "Surly" apologized or fought, "get into a good humour" with the same wonderful facility and speed. The image of Annie also appeared to me as she appeared when in the days of her childhood she sat by my side in the stage during our long and perilous journey to Philadelphia, complaining neither of fatigue or fear. The rougher countenances of F. and C., who were along with us then, making the passengers merry with their wit, and provoking the wayfarers we met with their practical jokes, came before me *too*. Nor did I fail to remember a certain Miss Molly Murray, who arrived in the fall of 18—, at a certain house in a certain village not five hundred miles from Holly Springs; how I went into ecstasies about her beauty and her accomplishments of mind and manner; how I feared to risk a life of poverty, not so much on my account as on hers

and the children to be; how I jumped into the stage with a friend and went down the Mississippi to see, and try to fall in love with a lovely heiress; how the image of the afore-said Miss Molly followed me, and haunted me; how after a trip of hundreds of miles, and a five minutes' look at the lovely heiress, I was led by the beautiful image back to its beautiful original;" and how I wooed and won her for "my bright and beauteous bride."

And now as I think of the trials I have caused this same Miss Molly; how her health failed; how cross and irritable and rough I have sometimes been in the midst of all my tenderness; how poverty really assailed us; how love didn't jump out of the window; how I worked and she submitted and scuffled and economized; how child after child was born; how alarmed I was for her at each birth; how we feared for the children afterwards; how sweet the little things were; how pure a fountain of happiness they have been to us; and how Honesty and Courage have driven back Poverty and Despair, a vision of beauty unfolds itself to my view. I see the angel Experience revealing and confirming the wisdom of God; and Faith, Hope, and Courage clustering around, ever ready to aid, cheer, and protect me and mine. The only condition upon which they base their pledges of aid, comfort, and protection being that we *try* to do right.

[*To be continued.*]

Captain Thomasson is laughing and talking to the ladies close by me. I am on the Magnolia, and wish to put this in the office before she starts.

WILLIAM ATSON.

## LETTER III.

Gentlemen.—Rowdies.—Tom Fraierson.—Happiness.—Misery.—The way to praise a wife.

S. B. Magnolia, above Bayou Sara, December 22, 1855.

MY WIFE:—I wrote you four pages last night, and had just fairly seated myself in the stage-coach, so I must start again on the 12th December. There were two passengers in the stage, and one on the outside. After riding five miles, “we took in” an old gentleman named Hinds. Before this I had discovered that Barnett was a gentleman; and that Tompkins and the fellow outside, who had gotten in, were rowdies. These last were very vulgar, very childish, and very silly. Tompkins stopped at the first “stand,” and the other was quiet afterwards. In fact he had been previously cooled off by a very simple joke. He asked for a chew of tobacco. Tompkins pulled out a plug, and handed it to him. He bit off a chew, and for fun, I suppose, said it was very poor tobacco. T. replied, “Yes, it is, I don’t chew that sort myself;” and pulled out a different article, and helped himself to a mouthful of it. The fellow actually spit out his piece, and would have no more. The fact being thus, that T. had given him his best tobacco, as he privately proved to us.

At dinner, the landlady was very communicative; told us of a love-letter her daughter, about fourteen years old, had received a day or two previously, of which the family could only decipher two or three words; said they had been plaguing her also about Tompkins, and representing him as fine-looking, that she didn't see anything extra about him; that she could tell a gentleman at a glance, that it was plain Barnett and myself were gentlemen, &c.

All the other passengers having gotten off at Ripley, B. and myself remained for some time the sole occupants of the coach. The former "piled up" on the front seat, and slept as soundly as though he were in a feather-bed. I doubled up on the back seat. During the night two gentlemen got in, and took the middle seat. The next day B. left us, and the gentlemen alluded to having exchanged their seat for his, presented their faces to my inspection. The more I scrutinized one of them, the more I became impressed with the belief that I had once known its owner. At the first stopping-place, he registered his name "Thomas Fraierson;" and I was about concluding my impression to be a mistake, when I learned that, notwithstanding the peculiarity of the spelling, he pronounced it Frierson. This threw a ray of light on my memory. I told him who I was, and in return he was very communicative. Fraierson and his brother were two bachelors, who lived together close by my father, when he first settled in the West. They were then farmers. F. sold out his interest to his brother for \$20,000, and took a mortgage on the slave property of both to secure the debt. They subsequently moved to different parts of an adjoining state.



His brother endorsed the bonds of acquaintances there, who had been sued. These failed to pay. The sheriff sold the former's property under the hammer, and the mortgage not having been recorded in that county, was void. Both brothers, who in the mean time had married, were thus rendered penniless.

The intelligent young man along with him was his son. The endorsing brother studied medicine, and is now a childless widower, physicking the sick in Arkansas. I wonder if his countenance is as pleasant a one as Tom's, who had a wife and children to support, learned how to set type in order to do it, then became an editor; and is now returning, with his pockets, I think, pretty full, from California, where he has spent the greater portion of the last five years editing a paper, and digging gold. His pleasant countenance is a pleasant image that haunts my memory. Reared in affluence, suddenly reduced to poverty, toiling with the solicitude of a husband and a parent year after year for bread and clothes, and at the age of forty-five with a quiet smile, bright as a sunbeam reposing on his face, this smiling or rather quietly happy expression so fixed that it must have been habitual through life, and not the mere pencilling of success after the long and torturing storm. Tom Fraierson is a character worthy to be deeply studied. Tell me, old friend, is this cheerfulness, this uniform quiet happiness, the result of organization, or religion, or philosophy, or the three combined? I should like to analyze it, to ascertain its constituents. We bade each other farewell at Columbus. In a few hours thereafter, the father and the son expected to be

with the wife and the children; the mother, the brother and the sister, they have not seen for two long years.

After hearing Tom Fraierson's history and looking at his cheerful face, I should have been truly ashamed if I had ever been weak enough to be unhappy. It is a sin to be so. It is practical atheism for a man free from physical pain, who never committed a deliberate crime, to be gloomy or miserable. If not atheism, it is an insult to the Deity. It is saying to Him: "You are not reliable, I can't trust you."

We arrived at Aberdeen about 7 o'clock, P. M., and had to remain till 1 o'clock, P. M., the next day. I found C., of New York, here, who may be a very valuable acquaintance, and introduced myself to him; spent the morning in attending to business, and in the afternoon travelled to Columbus. The ensuing day, the stage turned over between these villages. Accidents seem always to happen just before, or just after I pass. The rain also favoured me and my companions. Had it fallen before we arrived at Aberdeen, our walk at night would have been excessively disagreeable. It fell, however, after our arrival there; ceased before breakfast, and began to fall again after we were securely lodged in Columbus.

Men would be much happier, and women, too, were they to make a mark at every *pleasant*, instead of at every disagreeable incident in their career; or, as the poet advises, follow the example of the dial, and

"Take no note of time,  
Save when the sun is shining."

I understand the female heart too well, however, not to know that you will take but little interest in my narrative, unless I “get up” some misery. Well, the very day of my departure from home, my left shin began to feel sore. I examined, found a little boil thereon, and opened it. But it wouldn’t get well, “kept running,” like the baby’s, and was so tender that I told my *vis-a-vis* about it, and warned him not to strike against it on peril of his life. In Aberdeen, I “felt bad” about the neck from being twisted up in the stage. My head actually had for a short time a disagreeable sensation, and when about retiring to bed I found my night-shirt split nearly “in two.” This is all the misery I can remember being afflicted with thus far. I hope it is enough to excite your affection and sympathy. It is dreadful that I should be doomed to be so happy, is it not?

[*To be continued.*]

I promised you, in a previous letter, to praise you in my next. My next was written last night. Didn’t I make the praise come in as naturally as though it was gushing spontaneously from the heart? *And it was, too.* Kiss the children for me. What a luxury it would be to see you all!

Your affectionate husband,

WILLIAM ATSON.

## LETTER IV.

Composition.—Politeness.—Impoliteness.—Vicksburg.—Perseverance.—  
Advantages of adversity.—A crisis.—Prayer.—Who is a fool, &c.

Sunday morning, S. B. Magnolia, December 23, 1855.

DEAR MOLLY :—Eight pages, and only at Columbus ! This thing of composition is to me one of the greatest mysteries. I might think on a subject a year, and could then form no accurate idea as to how I would write about it. The very act of taking the pen in hand, arranging the paper and assuming a writing position, seems to effect a singular change in the operation of my mental mechanism. Are you not getting tired of this journalizing, and the train of reflections it elicits ? If so, remember I am acting in accordance with your request, and a request to the contrary will end it.

December 15, 1855.—After a night's rest, awoke in Columbus with fever blisters on my lip, and the boil on my shin in full bloom ; took breakfast, and walked in search of our attorneys. They were pointed out to me on the street. M. kindly insisted on going around and introducing me to the business men of the village. This consumed several hours, but I could not persuade him to desist till he was satisfied that he had aided me to the utmost of his ability.



How charming is honest, noiseless, unofficial practical politeness ! M. and myself are friends. Your old acquaintance, Dr. Blank, and myself are separated by a little icy barrier, which the least tangible disrespect on his part would cause me to break through, and seize him by the throat. M. is not aware that he has done anything to endear himself to me. The doctor does not know that my fingers are contracting, ready for the suffocating clutch. The only difference in their conduct was that one exhibited that sort of artless, efficient politeness to a stranger, which indicates a heart overflowing with kindness and sympathy ; and the other that sort of formal etiquette, which coldly calculates with how little respect it can treat you, and yet not offend.

As a matter of course, I stand prepared to correct all conclusions so rapidly formed. In fact, I do not think it improbable that Dr. Blank's absorption in a mule trade might have caused him to forget my presence, though I saw him again in the afternoon and had no reason to be better pleased.

Are all the Vicksburg folks destitute of politeness, except old McMackin ? I have been always treated everywhere, whether known or unknown, with so much more respect and politeness than I anticipated, it struck me as very singular, that the reverse should be so completely the case in this would-be-city. Dr. Blank introduced me to four physicians, seated and standing around his fireside, and offered me a chair. I took a seat. They continued to converse among themselves, and not one of them addressed a word to me. I never before in all my meanderings witnessed, among men

apparently genteel, such an uncalled-for and gross breach of politeness.

On Saturday evening I took tea at M.'s, and there met with Dr. Samuel Malone. The doctor has been residing and practising medicine in Columbus, for twenty-four years. His success—the harvest he has reaped, and is still reaping—beautifully and forcibly illustrates the good policy of perseveringly pursuing one object at one place.

Dislike to my profession, has been my chief misfortune. Quitting it was my great pecuniary blunder. But if I can succeed now, I shall ever rejoice that I committed the blunder. It has led me into *trials*, which have given me an enlarged experience, taught me charity, and *proved* me. I would not exchange for the gold of California and the fame of Napoleon, the knowledge of the proven fact, that no form of temptation, neither vanity, nor ambition, nor the love of money, nor conjugal or parental affection aided by a poverty which threatened starvation, or a hopeless and humiliating dependence, which is more painful to the proud and sensitive, ever caused you or me to waver, in obeying the dictates of the most punctilious and cruel honesty.

What is being shot, or burnt at the stake, or shut in the lion's den, compared to the slow agony of debt and poverty, with a lovely, sickly, scuffling, economical wife and three helpless, loving little daughters trusting to you for support? This reads as though I were unhappy during the ordeal. I was not so. I would have been, had I wavered for a moment about the policy of being honest, or entertained any serious doubts about God's being bound "to stand up to" and bring

me and mine out of the fiery furnace unharmed, and *benefited*. There was a period during which my nerves trembled a little. This was when after having in advance of law, and the knowledge of creditors that I was "broken," disposed of everything to pay firm debts, it became evident that my experiment in farming had failed, that my practice amounted to nothing, that I could procure no employment at the South by which I could realize any certain profit. This trembling of the nerves was, however, only momentary. When I visited the North and was disappointed in the object of my visit, and continuing my journey to New York, became satisfied that there was no chance to better my condition in that city, the crisis was reached—"the last pale hope shivered at my heart." There was, however, no trembling, no fear, no grief *then*. That imperturbable calmness which always steals through my physical, moral, and mental nature in the hour of actual trial, or real danger, took possession of me. I concluded, instantly, that God saw it was best to lengthen the period of my poverty, and apply to me all its tortures. And I felt something of "that stern joy which warriors feel, who fight with foemen worthy of their steel." I thought my courage would be tried to the utmost; that my friends would begin to entertain feelings of pity and contempt for a man of talents, as they call me, who could not support his family; that unceasing and comparatively unsuccessful toil would be my portion; that demons in the shape of trivial but irritating and unavoidable annoyances would ever pursue and constantly inflict their festering outrages upon me: but I believed that my wife and children

would love me; and that God would watch, and ultimately reward the struggle.

Alice has frequently asked me, if I prayed; and you, I think, have made the same inquiry. Referring everything, as I do, to God, and believing in the moral agency of man, I could not refrain from praying. Prayer is the habit of my soul. In the crisis just alluded to, I prayed; and the substance of my prayer was, "If it be necessary for me to drink the cup of affliction, let me drink it *alone*. Bless my family, but afflict me. Give them ease, comfort, health, plenty; but let disease, or some separate calamity, seize hold of me. If, however, affliction be necessary for their moral education and advancement as well as mine, enable us to bear it calmly and courageously."

In forty-eight hours my prospects brightened—the crisis had passed, the clouds were beginning to disperse, rays of sunlight made the landscape smile; and God hung the bow of promise athwart the blue sky and in the face of the retreating storm.

I am poor still. But everything previously seemed to work 'against me; and now everything appears "to strike right." A competency is all I seek. There is now every probability of my gaining it. My separation from you and the little ones, who so sweetly beg their father not to leave them, is the only nauseous ingredient remaining in the cup. Let us be *grateful*. Let us never forget the glorious hour of trial. We have fought the battle of the Delaware. Let us be ever ready for that of Yorktown. Let us teach our children that the man or woman whom prosperity spoils, is a fool; and that he or



she who cannot calmly and hopefully bear adversity, is an infidel or a coward.

Yours affectionately,

WILLIAM ATSON.



## LETTER V.

Misery and death.—Courage.—Atson's will.—Honest from principle.

Sunday evening, Magnolia, December 23, 1855.

DEAR MOLLY:—Twelve pages, and not away from Columbus yet. You won't grumble any more about short letters, will you?

Before quitting the train of thought which ended my last, I wish to add a word or two. I am in superb health. My constitution is fine: I inherit no disease. I am very prudent in my habits, understand pretty well the laws of hygiene; and my mother, whom I resemble physically, has taken no care of her health; and is yet alive and "well."

If any man could calculate upon long life, I might safely do so. To reason upon such a subject, is, however, precarious. I have always accustomed myself to look at the worst aspect of affairs. When a boy, fighting on the banks of the Withlacoochee, I would not permit my courage to depend on the hope of escape. I tried, when advancing into battle, or danger of any kind, to *realize* that I would be killed. I have pursued the same course ever since; and to this I attribute a great deal of my uniform composure and happiness. Fix your eye firmly and courageously upon any dark spot in the

future, and light, at first imperceptible, will begin to shine around it. Advance, and the darkness will diminish, retreat, and probably disappear. This disposition to test the strength of my nerves, combined with my philosophy, or religion, or whatever you may call it, has caused me to habituate myself to looking Misery and Death straight in the face, until I have discovered behind the hideous mask of the one a beautiful teacher, with a rod in her hand, to be thrown away as soon as the childish world becomes mature; and, behind the dark veil of the other, the friend of man and his conductor to the skies. These preliminary remarks are to show, that thinking of death, and thinking it possible I may soon die, do not indicate that I am at all depressed or gloomy. I should, in that event, bid you farewell with a full heart and a tear in the eye. But, calculating upon meeting you all again, where our probation would be over, or, at least, not so severe, the smile of hope would buoy up the full heart, and irradiate the falling tear.

In case I should die, I want you to tell the children that I was reared in affluence, with "high notions," and commenced the career of manhood with as complete an ignorance of the art of making money as any moderately sensible man ever did; that at the age of thirty-one or two, by hard work and your assistance and economy, I had acquired a little capital, then moved to S., built up a fine business, made a business man of myself, took in a partner for two reasons, to get more capital, and have the services of one who had more experience in the buying department and greater facilities for purchasing cheaply than myself; that in a few months

after the formation of this partnership, I found our firm mysteriously "broken;" that I returned, took the management of the business in order to save our creditors, *forced* A. to pay his part; and deliberately and calmly made myself *literally* pennyless, descending *step by step* WITH MY FAMILY, (ah, that was the rub!) into the vale of poverty, with my eye fixed all the time upon its Hobgoblins and Horrors, *believing at every* DOWNWARD *step, that with my credit, I could turn around and* ASCEND *with the loved ones to wealth* WITHOUT SULLYING MY CHARACTER OR THEIRS *in the estimation of the Public.* I saw how I could make this ascent by a path so much like, so close to, and *so nearly parallel* with that of honesty, that careless spectators would never recognise the difference. I, however, was unable to ascend by the straight and narrow track; and rather than attempt the ascent by any other route, I would have starved and witnessed the starvation of you all.

The little ones may not understand this. They will probably say, "We thought Pa loved us." He does, and that's the very reason the Devil was not fool enough even to tempt him to error. I believed that honesty was the best policy, no matter to what grade of misery it lead. I was bound to consult our mutual good, and therefore stuck to my rudder throughout the entire storm.

I am honest from principle, and could only become a rascal by changing my principles. In that case I should not conceal the change from myself, but would base my action coolly and designedly upon it. I have a great contempt or rather pity for those miserable, doubting, cowardly wretches, who try "to



split the difference" between honesty and dishonesty. The Conrads, the Turpins, the Lafittes, are the rascals I admire; the Rebeccas, the Gertrudes, the Winifreds, are the women I love.

I wonder if it could be possible that you and I could be the parents of a child dishonest or destitute of virtue. If time should ever demonstrate such a horrible possibility, I should believe it the result of education or circumstances. Our offspring could certainly inherit no such tendency. Watch, therefore, and do not be too silent. Your own purity may render you too unsuspecting. Incessantly instil into the children a hatred of vice, and a love of truth and virtue. Tell them the former, whatever garb or aspect he assumes, is a Demon bent upon their ruin, and that the latter, no matter how thickly veiled, are two beautiful Angels desirous of leading them to good, to happiness, and to God.

Do not in charity to me, attempt to conceal *from them* my faults—Honesty is the best policy. Do not let my mode of writing deceive you into the belief that I am becoming any better. I am the same fellow, who left you about ten days ago. If I were to stump my toe, I expect I should say "confound it." Were a man to insult me, I expect I should persuade him to retract; or in case of his refusal to do so, "pitch into him," *if I didn't get too badly scared.*

I should be pleased to see our girls, at a suitable age, become consistent members of any decent branch of the Church. To the query why I do not join one, I can only reply, "I could not *honestly* do so." As soon as I can, I think I will.

My father, than whom there never was a more consistently

pious man, Paul, Luther, Wesley included, taught me to do what I, not what he or any one else, *thought was right*. This is the doctrine I wish my children taught. It is a kind of polar star that shines brightly all the night, or rather a moral needle that tells us the cardinal points amid the blackness and darkness of the storm.

Orleans in sight—the Magnolia under full headway. Kiss the children.

Yours affectionately,

WILLIAM ATSON.

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## LETTER VI.

Economical family.—A genius.—A lovely young lady.—Sending from home.—Schools.—Stage and horseback trip.—A ducking.—Getting on the wrong boat.—The Magnolia.—New Orleans.—A gentleman with a grand air.—The theatre.

NEW ORLEANS, December 25th, 1855.

DEAR MOLLY.—December 16th, 1855. Sixteen pages, and still balked in Columbus. Some six, eight, or ten pages back, I said. On Saturday evening I took tea at M's., —, intending to add, and supped with R. Sunday evening. I understood R. to say he would call on me Sunday morning. The appointment being positive, I waited for him till it was too late to attend Church. He came in the afternoon, and I accompanied him home. His is a very interesting family. Everything indicates good breeding and gentility, regulated by a necessitous or rather an honest economy. They have two handsome daughters, fifteen and twelve, though neither

appears to be over the latter age. Some visitors called, and among the rest a very handsome boy, only six years old, who is a genius. When an infant, his right arm became palsied, and the wrist and hand joints fell out of place. He has only partially recovered their use. I read some months ago of a little prodigy about his age, who of his own accord and without any instructor, began to draw or paint pictures, and always commenced them at the bottom, beginning for instance with the man's or horse's foot. This is the precise history of this little nobleman. On account of his misfortune he uses his left hand, but this does not prevent his drawing rapidly and beautifully. His name is Booth Jordan. When Cousin Caroline entered the room, I was puzzled to recollect whether she was "the beauty" or her younger sister. I at first concluded it could not be her. My opinion changed as I continued to look at and listen to her. Those who thought Annie beautiful would have thought her so. They are fac-similes of each other in size, figure, face. I am not certain but that Annie had the advantage in eyes. Cousin Cary's other features would however bear criticism the best. They are more regular. Her power, like Annie's, lay mainly in manner and conversation. I judge of the latter more by the effect on others. Raised together, as we were, I was slow in noticing her developed charms. Even her brilliant beauty would not have arrested my attention, but for the gaze of thrilled and dazzled admirers. Cousin Cary's manners "struck me" as similar though original, eccentric, and fascinating. Every movement and tone seemed perfectly easy, natural, unstrained. She reminds one of an actress, an actress so

perfect, that though art-*full*, she does not exhibit the least appearance of art. Her conversation is not a continual flow. Her remarks are only occasional, but it seems to be impossible for her to make one of any moment without gesticulation of some kind with the hands, and some movements of the body. These gesticulations and motions being exceedingly graceful and so managed, or so natural and appropriate, as to give a peculiar emphasis and charm to whatever she says. One evening fascinated me. Whether the fascination would diminish or increase by additional association, I cannot tell.

There is frequently a mystery about the expenditures of poor people. The remark is common, "*that man* is worth nothing, does nothing, and lives in style." The inference is that he robs or steals. You have seen females who by gratifying their vanity, their love of dress and show, caused the community before which they exhibit themselves, and to please which they ruin, husbands and children, to regard them as refined rogues, or gilded adulteresses, simply because that community cannot comprehend how Poverty and Idleness can honestly and virtuously collect and scatter so much money. A conversation during the evening reminded me of S. We know him to be very poor, so poor as to have excited our sympathy to the utmost tension compatible with honesty and our little purse. Still he has sent his daughter to a distant school. In debt, almost on the eve of beggary, and yet *must* send his child away from the influences of home, and first-rate home schools, to one of which he knows nothing. This is doubtless the chief attraction. Ignorance "lends enchantment to the view."



December 17th. Was "waked" at 2, and got in the stage at 3 o'clock, A. M. Started with six passengers, a young lady and gentleman on the back, self and student on the middle, Hughes and Aldridge on the front seat; might have dozed, but the lady's tongue rattled like the clapper of a bell rung by a perpetual motion machine. This continuous ringing almost drowned the love-notes of her companion of the day, who was not deficient in quiet impudence, and could talk "some." Aldridge's head had a silvery hue, but his heart was green. He was full of fun and wit, and possessed the gift of saying the most ordinary things so as to make the grummiest laugh.

The planters on this road are too wealthy to keep "stage stands," and we had to go without breakfast. Notwithstanding the demands of our stomachs, we could only wade through the rich adhesive prairie mud at the rate of two and a half miles per hour, and did not arrive at Macon, thirty miles distant, till 1 o'clock P. M. Here the most of us eat together and then parted.

After dinner I mounted a hired horse, which proved to be a fine traveller, and started for Wahalak. The distance, I was informed before starting, was twenty, eighteen, sixteen miles. Rode about six miles, and asked a negro, how far? Twelve miles, was the reply. The eighteen mile fellows were right, thought I;  $12 + 6$  are 18. Rode on two or three miles farther and met another negro. "Well, uncle, do you know the way to Wahalak?" "Yes, sir." "How far is it?" "*Thirteen miles.*" "*The Devil.*" Rode a mile or two farther. "Mister, am I on the right road to Wahalak?" "Yes, sir."

"How far is it?" "FOURTEEN miles." With woe, too deep for utterance, rode on. "Uncle, please tell me how far it is to Wahalak?" "Five miles, sir." "You are mistaken, ain't you?" "No, *sir*." Two miles farther. "Mister, will you be so good as to tell me the distance to Wahalak?" "It's NINE miles." Another trot up the hills and down the hills. "Heigho, Mister, please direct me the way to Wahalak, and tell me how far it is?" The old man, the owner of a fine dwelling and a large plantation, is a hundred or two yards distant, but he hears, looks, sees I am a stranger, and approaches to tell me I am in the right road, and six miles from my destination, but more especially to advise me to be cautious about crossing a certain creek, which from the amount of rain that had fallen a day or two previously, he supposes will be too deep for fording. After discussing with himself the advantages and disadvantages of several routes, he directed me to keep the usual one, but to inquire the condition of the creek at a little village just this side of it. I rode on in great glee, delighted at having thus far taken at every doubtful point the right fork of this forky road, but more particularly at the good-natured politeness and disinterested kind-heartedness of the old gentleman. At the little village I made the inquiry. The man replied, "There's Mr. James, he has just crossed, and can tell you all about it." James said, "It will about reach up to your saddle skirts." I rode forward, with cloak on, for it was a cool evening, raised my feet *slightly*, and PLUNGED IN. The horse swam from the first dip, and I came out wet *up to*, and *a little above*, the bifurcation of my nether extremities. Night had come. It was two miles and a half to Waha-

lak; I was doubtful whether I could get lodging there; and I had no change of raiment along. "On, on sped Godolphin," till he reached the mansion of J. T. Maynard, once the business man of the village, and still the big man of the neighbourhood; I told him a fellow named James had lied me into the creek, and gained permission to spend the night at his house. The old gentleman, the old lady, and the son soon had me dressed in dry and genteel clothes. How they found out I was a gentleman was a mystery to me, but they seemed to discover it instantly. A rather common family, composed of an old woman, several young men, and children, had solicited their hospitality just before my arrival. These were treated with proper politeness when present, but I was invited into the parlour, where sat the family of my host, all of whom acted towards me as though I were a beloved or distinguished guest. I shall never forget them, neither the boys, nor the girls, nor the clever old man, nor the handsome and noble old lady.

The next morning was clear, frosty, exhilarating. My boil was still discharging, but in every other respect I was as sound as a silver dollar. My health, the weather, the beauty of *little kind words*, of *little kind acts*, of unaffected, spontaneous politeness, Jenkins's warning, Maynard's dry clothes, all combined to make me gloriously happy; I made the woods of the Noxubee ring with my mirth. I repeated and reiterated Will Shakspeare's couplet,

"The quality of mercy is not strained,  
It droppeth as the gentle dew from heaven."

I got so in love with human nature, that I began to think *per-*



*haps* James had been deceived, and “may be it wouldn’t be wrong for me *not to* beat or abuse him in case we met.” Images of the old tenants of the forest hovered around, reminding me that my adventure was comparatively nothing. *I had merely wet my legs* in the waters of the Wahalak, through which the Indian maids used to swim; across which the Indian warriors used to rush their ponies to and from dance and danger; and in which they were wont to bathe their wearied limbs after the battle or the hunt.

Returning by a new route, in order to cross the stream at a ferry, and miss another ducking, I did not meet my ducker. Reached Macon at noon, hired buggy and driver, started for Louisville, journeyed fifteen or eighteen miles, was “taken in” at Willis’s, talked politics during the evening, and “pitched into” secession and repudiation; things I rarely do when absent from home, unless, as was the case then, in the presence of young men about ready to vote, who reside where this ultraism is popular, and this rascality practised. Our landlord was a plain, clever fellow. His wife was “some.” She went to see about *the plate* twice, while the driver was eating supper; was surprised, as we were eating breakfast, about day-break, to hear me say, I never could tell when day was breaking; told me she had *always* known that, and how to descry the approaching dawn; that day’s-breaking was simply owing to the advance of the sun to the eastern horizon, and a streak of light in the east always preceded his appearance an hour or so.

Reached Louisville December 19th, in the morning, and

made the acquaintance of the merchants whilst awaiting the arrival of the stage.

Left at 3 o'clock, and passed through Kosciusko, Camden, Canton, and Jackson.

*	*	*	*	*	*
*	*	*	*	*	*

Arrived at Vicksburg in the forenoon of the 21st, and, as I was walking down the street from the depot, saw the "John Simonds" lying at the wharf; hesitated a moment, concluded I would see Memphis acquaintances and Memphis papers on it, whereas on the Magnolia I would know no one but the busy captain; hurried down the steep hill, got on board just as the last bell rang, *congratulated myself* on being in time, ran up stairs, shook hands with several, heard one of the passengers say something about "going up," wheeled, ran down, the boat was "backing out," pumped with saddle bags on arm, reached the shore safely, *congratulated myself* on the timely discovery of my error and my safe escape, walked down to the Magnolia, and again introduced myself to Thomasson. The style of living on "The Magnolia" is as sumptuous as ever.

Monday, New Orleans. Took lodgings at the St. Charles, called at Hammonds & Co., and received no letter or paper from home. On returning to the hotel met Mr. M. and Doctor W. of Plaquemine. The latter was on his way to the West Indies. He, too, neglected his profession, tried merchandise, formed a partnership, and "broke." The former thinks he is rich, has sold a portion of his Plaquemine estate, and purchased on a credit another large plantation with something under a hundred negroes for a fraction under a hundred

thousand dollars. M. is a clever fellow. He is sociable, honourable, and a friend of mine. But, "Good Heavens!" what a grand air he has! how dignified in manner and speech! how he holds his head to one side as though he had chronic crick in the neck! Notwithstanding these peculiarities I like him. He knows me like a book. He is aware that I smile at all such fancy touches, and I "guess" would doff his mock dignity, straighten his neck, and put his hat on top of his head, when alone in my presence, were he not afraid I would catch him donning the humbuggery. At night I visited the theatre, to see "The Star Actor and Actress" Barney Williams and wife. I was "awfully bored," and so completely disgusted by the indecency and silliness of the comedies performed, that I resolved never to attend the theatre again unless I am assured by good authority that a decent play is to be performed, and a truly great actor or actress to perform it.

Vulgarity, in the presence of ladies, annoys me no little. I feel that the whole sex is being degraded when the offender is a man; and it is hardly decent to talk to one's wife about a vulgar woman.

The audience, however, was "*highly appreciative*." The applause was long and loud; the encores frequent. A climax of vulgarity always "brought down the house."

Finney is always polite and friendly. I tried to convince him that I was rich, and would have been poor had his advice been followed. After diverting myself in this way awhile, I told him the facts—that I should not have had the same amount of pecuniary loss or trouble, had I been governed by his experience; but if I could henceforth keep rising, I

should never regret my failure. For I had learned by it enough, unless Providence frowned upon my efforts, to enable me to acquire, ultimately, vastly more than I would ever have acquired without this lesson.

December 25. Received one short letter from Molly. I am sorry I have written so much. It will be heaping coals of fire on her head. She will, however, reflect that my writing was done in advance, and, consequently, in ignorance of what she would do; and, therefore, not designed to have this effect. Thus I shall be forgiven.

"Took" one delicious glass of egg-nogg with Hammonds and his friends, returned to my room, and wrote business letters the balance of the day and night till bedtime.

December 26. Black was regretting that this was not the trip of the steamer "Mexico," as she was so much more commodious, and rocked so much less than "The Louisiana." Just after we parted, I met a travelling companion, who informed me that "the Company" had concluded, since we engaged tickets, to send the former. Samuel Hancock has also selected me a room-mate, for whose gentlemanly qualities he vouches. So, thus far, you see, my good luck continues.

And now farewell. At 8 o'clock in the morning I start. The Mexico will soon leave the muddy waters of the Mississippi, and ride the rough, blue waves of the Gulf.

Don't be discouraged about farming. *All you can do is your best.* Do this, and calmly trust Providence for the result.

I have enjoyed my Christmas by keeping employed. I hope you and the children have spent a merrier one. Kiss

them for me. Accept my best love for yourself. Be prudent, sleep a plenty, take your tonic, and let me see a vision of the old beauty when I return. Tell the negroes "howd'ye."

Your affectionate husband,

WILLIAM ATSON.



## LETTER VII.

Texas.—Geography of "Lavaca Bay."—The author in love.—Treachery.—  
A prescription.

POWDER HORN, January 2, 1856.

DEAR MOLLY:—It is cruel in me to persecute you with so many and such long letters in return for your solitary short one; but, "out of the fulness of the heart the mouth speaketh," and the hand writeth. At Galveston, on the 30th, I wrote to Alice, telling her, and therefore you, of my safe passage across the Gulf. After "laying up" at that Island City about thirty-six hours on account of "a norther," we left at about 3 o'clock Sunday afternoon for this place. As you may not be learned in Texas geography, I will inform you that there are three rival cities on Lavaca Bay—Powder Horn, the nearest the Gulf, Indianola, four miles above, and Port Lavaca, twelve miles beyond the latter.

*These cities contain two or three hundred inhabitants apiece. The last two profess to consider themselves one, and their interests the same, though so far apart. The steamers, on account of the shallowness of the bay, land at Powder Horn. This has drawn the business almost entirely from Indianola*



and makes Lavaca, though still the chief town, tremble as it looks into the future

With this explanation, I proceed.

The coldness of the weather during our stay on the steamer the facts that there was only one stove for all the cabin passengers, above and below, male and female, and that the tables were stationary, and so arranged as to prevent all, save a few at a time, from approaching within warming distance of the fire, together with the lingering nausea, the result of previous sea-sickness on the part of most of the passengers, made us all glad to get ashore, though fully aware that we had on land new and equally disagreeable difficulties to encounter.

The passengers, while crowded on board, seemed to be very sociable. Dispersion did not cause them to forget. I have met a good many, since leaving the boat, and the cordiality of their grasp, and the friendly familiarity with which they call me Doctor, and speak of "*the Doctor*," and the kindness of their "adieu" (both male and female), as the stage drags them away, make the bystanders think us old friends; and caused me, and doubtless caused them, to recollect that we are mortal; and that, notwithstanding our kindly feelings, our pleasant conversations, our smiling countenances, we may never meet again.

I pity the man or the woman *who has a secret of his own to keep*; or who believes in the rascality of his fellow man; or has any malice in his heart; or who takes a gloomy view of human prospects; or who is afraid of anything in the heavens above or in the earth beneath, but error; or who does not believe

“The right will ever come uppermost,  
And justice ever be done;”

or who is ashamed to talk freely and kindly; or, if necessary, fearlessly and firmly to his brother man; or who is not disposed, while seeking comfort himself, to scatter comforts around him.

I should like to give you the names, and describe the peculiarities of the most prominent passengers, but time forbids; and I will only say a word or two about one who excited all my sympathy. Take care that the description does not excite your jealousy. The fact is, I did “get *a little* in love,” and might have gotten completely into Cupid’s whirlpool had it not been for two things—her husband, and *the old love* at home.

Mrs. Gregory was not a brilliant beauty—not so brilliantly beautiful as was “the old love;” but her features were good and regular; her hazel eyes were expressive of intelligence and amiability; her smile, as the rosy lips parted over a perfect set of teeth, gave a peculiar charm to the whole face; her voice, soft and musical, was “sweet as seraph’s song;” her form was excellent; and her manners, unaffected and easy, gave no indication of bashfulness, but exhibited the purest modesty.

You don’t blame me now, do you, for being just a little in love? I have not, however, told you all. This lovely woman, certainly not over twenty, probably not eighteen years of age, was *cheerfully* following her husband, a major or captain of the United States army, fully as old and as ugly as myself, away from relations and friends, home and society, without



any female companion except a black woman, to the western frontier of Texas, where there is no church, no pleasures, no society, to be cooped up in a little fort with stiff, metal-buttoned officers, and rough, rude, regular soldiers always in sight; Indians hovering around, and war and "rumours of war" always ringing in her ears, and the dread of attack always lying upon her heart.

She has deliberately chosen the sacrifice.

Her husband is doubtless a clever man, and fond of his wife; but he does not know how to treat such a woman. He didn't see that she kept her feet warm on the steamer. He would send for doctors, and "sit up" with her if she were sick; but he would talk loudly, or walk heavily, or with creaking shoes, across the room; and would allow others to come in and disturb her with their injudicious talk. He wouldn't know how to force her to be comfortable—how to drive away low spirits with a word or a kiss—how to be cheerful when her comfort required him to make a sacrifice, and to be sternness itself when she wanted to make an unnecessary sacrifice of comfort, health, or convenience for him. At this very time, she is jogging along in a sort of carryall, with "a norther" blowing the rain in her face, herself, and her black maid, with a countenance as fine as that of her mistress, suffering and smiling; and the major, and a simple lieutenant with metal buttons, named Johnson, well muffled up, but grunting and grumbling, and not ashamed to grunt and grumble, at their own little inconveniences; while the same causes force no murmur of discontent from the more sensitive, and delicately organized women beside them. You understand now

why I used the word sympathy. And you will not blame me, because this sympathy excited within me *a little brotherly love* for *the lovely* Mrs. Gregory.

After arriving here I found accidentally that there was a vacant seat in the stage as far as Lavaca. It is customary for stage passengers who are going the farthest to have the preference, and a gentleman in Lavaca had sent down and engaged a seat, intending to get in as it passed that village. I reached there by 3 o'clock, got dinner, and proceeded to the transaction of business.

January 1st. Completed my business in Lavaca, where I made the acquaintance of a Doctor Lawrence, formerly of Nashville, and sundry other persons, who treated me so respectfully, so politely, so kindly, that I feel very friendly to them, and permit no doubt of its reciprocity to impair or extinguish the friendliness of my feelings. Just before sundown bade adieu to this pioneer town, with its sheet of water in front, and its sheet of level prairie around,—travelled back to Indiana, reached there about 9 o'clock at night, found the gentleman whom I desired to see, at a ball, called him out, and made arrangements by which I was enabled to finish my business in time to come here, in the omnibus, this morning.

January 2d, Powder Horn. Just arrived, and find that the boat for Matagorda has postponed starting till to-morrow morning on account of "the norther" which has been blowing its icy breath athwart the waters of the Gulf for the greater part of ten days.

As yet I can begin to make no calculations about returning.

I shall finish Smith & Co.'s business, and polish it off well before leaving this state.

Were it my own business, home and the sweet faces of wife and children might tempt me to neglect it; but treachery, however slight or deeply secreted in my bosom, would rob my heart of its regular pulsation, my rough countenance of its honest look and cheerful smile, my hand of its cordial grasp, and my step of its firm and fearless tread. *I should have a secret of my own.*

Absence from home is the only drug in my cup. How small this affliction appears, when the sacrifices and the miseries of others are unfolded to the view! Hoping I may soon become able to linger by my own fireside, there to enjoy the rich harvest of affection which always flourishes around it, I now bid you and the little ones an affectionate farewell.

WILLIAM ATSON.

#### A PRESCRIPTION.

Postscript.—The cold weather here has caused me to think of Alice trudging so far to school. Teach her some of the laws of health. Tell her never to sit in a moderately cold room till she gets imperceptibly “chilled through,” to go, under such circumstances, to a fire, and if no fire is near, to walk, or run, or jump, or throw her arms about till she gets warm. Tell her that getting either her feet or her body wet, will generally do her no harm, but keeping on wet clothes, or shoes or stockings, is unhealthy.

Tell her also never to bundle up in pleasant weather, or in

a comfortable room, but to put on her cloak, gloves, overshoes just as she leaves the house for the colder atmosphere without.

This is very simple advice, but the reason the world does not get better and happier faster is, because its *smart* inhabitants prefer the mysterious and unattainable to the simple and the practicable. The judicious practice of the above little rules would add ten years to the present average of human life.

A.



## LETTER VIII.

Texas.—The Bludget.—Sea sickness.—A bay sunset.—Hospitality.—Little Boggy.—Storm at Matagorda.—George Washington.

January 7th, 1856, at VOSBURG, thirty miles from }  
WHARTON, in the prairie, near the Brazos. }

DEAR MOLLY:—On January the 2d I wrote to you from Powder Horn. I did not however say to you, as I did to Smith & Co., that I was about to start upon the trip of trips, in the weather of weather; I was fearful of alarming you.

January 3d. Started ("the norther" still blowing), on a tiny sloop about the size of too large skiffs, for Matagorda. It was the first time I ever trusted myself to sails on salt water. The little "Bludget" turned and tossed amid the tumultuous waters of the bay, like a straw in an eddy of the Mississippi. The waves ever and anon swept over her deck, but still she struggled manfully and kept her course at the rate of five or six miles an hour, not merely walking the waters "like a thing of life," but careering over and charging through them like a



high-mettled steed in the hour of battle, excited to frenzy by the spur, the music, and the roar of artillery, struggling through the ranks of opposing squadrons.

The rocking, the reeling, the careening, the surging, of the sloop produced the slightest perceptible nausea. I kept quiet and was congratulating myself on being a tried sailor, proof against sea-sickness, when all at once, with scarcely an increase of the disagreeable sensation, I leaned over and "threw up" my breakfast. After this I lay flat on my back, took a snack at dinner time, and was troubled but little more.

By the bye, I am well satisfied that this is the best if not the only remedy for or preventive of sea-sickness. I tried it, and so did many others on the steamer, and it certainly did cure some and alleviate the sufferings of others.

As the day advanced, and we got farther out towards sea, the bay was smoother and the vessel ran more steadily. The voyage was not so unpleasant as I anticipated. I could not read much, but occasional conversation with Burke and the little boy who assisted Captain Cleaveland, together with the jokes, the whistlings, and the snatches of songs sung by "States" Hill, a lively young fellow of Matagorda, whiled away the time.

I can almost say I saw a sea sunset. That I did see was sufficiently beautiful. As the sun reached the farthest edge of the bay, it seemed for a moment to rest upon the land—an immense ball of fire—and, as it rested there, for a moment its exact counterpart appeared burning beneath, in the bosom of the water. Presently both lost their globular forms,—one reposing on the land and pointing its huge and solid pyramid



of red fire toward the blue sky above,—the other pointing its fiery pinnacle down, towards the same sky mirrored in the watery depths below. The white houses of Matagorda had been visible for two hours, but still we were several miles distant, and the speed of the boat had become decidedly slower. At length darkness settled down upon earth and bay, States Hill became serious, and questioned and cross-questioned the Captain, until I learned that we had no skiff, that no skiff could probably be obtained, that we could not approach within a quarter or half a mile of land, and that there was a strong probability we would have to remain on board through the long, chilly night, the only alternative being a wade to shore through water over knee deep.

The boat cast anchor. Hill and the Captain hooped and halloed, and the former shot off my pistol, which I carry safely ensconced in the bottom of my saddle-bags. All this, however, produced no response, and we were about despairing, though “feeling” our boy, to see if he could be hired to wade ashore, when the oars of a skiff were heard striking the bosom of the bay. The oarsman was a sailor going out to his sloop. He loaned the skiff to us, and we were soon ashore trudging towards the “Colorado House.”

January 4th. Attended to my business last night after supper. To-day examined horses, and finally purchased one for \$68. The reason for making this purchase was, that upon an accurate calculation of expenses, I find that stage travelling with the occasional hiring of a horse, will cost Smith & Co. as much, and probably more, than the same trip taken on horse-back, even if I have to give the horse away after it is com-

pleted. How polite, how friendly everybody everywhere is to me! I have been in Matagorda only twenty-four hours. I never knew any one there before; and yet a general disposition to serve me is manifested. Boyell & Selkirk, to whom I never did but one thing, and that was dunning them for a debt they had paid, have made me feel perfectly at home, introduced me to their acquaintances, loaned me their papers, loaded my pistol gratis, and wouldn't charge me for a spur.

Davis, once their clerk, and formerly from Belmont, Tennessee, though I never saw him before, has taken special pains to provide me a conveyance to Wharton. He was about starting on a long trip, and intended riding the very horse I purchased; and, although it was a source of considerable inconvenience to him, he urged me, if my interest or convenience required it, to make the purchase.

Captain Thompson, a wealthy planter, to whom Davis introduced me before I had determined to buy a horse, offered me a seat in his carriage as far as his plantation, thirty-five miles distant, and then to loan me a horse to ride to Wharton. So much for Texas hospitality thus far.

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January 5th. Still cold, and "a norther" blowing, slipped my blanket, purchased yesterday for the purpose, over my head, and my cloak over that, and started in company with Henry Rust and Davis. On we jogged over the level prairie for seven miles, and at this point came to "Little Boggy." This is the name of a stream or slough with a miry bottom. To prevent miring, planks were laid under the water at the ford. Colonel Hawkins' carriage went safely across, also young Jones and

several other outriders. So did Davis; Rust's horse, however, an old headstrong fellow, who was thirsty, stepped over the ends of the planks before his rider could check him. Warned by this I reined up my steed, who was following, but had scarcely done so when his feet slipped between the planks into the deep bog. He plunged fearfully, falling and rising, rising and falling. I hung on like an Arab until the girth broke, and then myself, my saddle, saddle-bags and hat rolled into the water some three or four inches deep, and stirred up none of your Tennessee mud with sand in it that dries and can be brushed off, but the black, thick, tarry, prairie mud. Davis says, as I rolled into this puddle, with cloak and blanket around my arms fastened so as to render them almost useless, my horse rearing and falling on one side of me, and Rust's horse about to begin his plunging on the other side, I exclaimed, in the words of the old song, "I'm a used up man." The quotation was exceedingly appropriate.

My horse finally got out. I followed, and though the wet mud stuck half an inch thick on pants, cloak, blanket, &c., I scarcely reached the solid ground before I joined Davis in making the welkin ring with peals of laughter at my comical condition.

Rust's horse now started. He made a lunge or two. Rust, waving his hand, and swaying his body something like a drunken man, exclaimed, "I am gone," and down he dropped. Shouts of laughter greeted his descent into the mud. He came out, the horse followed, and then the merriment became long and loud.

Davis scraped me off with a knife; but the wet had soaked

through boots and breeches, and carried the cold with it. The wind however soon lulled, the sun shone out warmly, and we became dry and comfortable; but still continued to look muddy and *ugly*.

We travelled twenty miles in this plight, and spent the night at Captain Rugley's, a hospitable sugar and cotton planter. The captain was in Orleans, but his lady entertained us finely. I had not previously, in Texas, slept on a bed softer than a board. Mrs. Rugley's beds were so large, so full of feathers, so firm, and yet so soft; in short, so much like "Ma's" eighty-pounders, that I could but compliment her the next morning on the possession of such a luxury. In the autumn of 1854, a storm swept over Matagorda and the contiguous Peninsula. It blew down almost every house in the town, destroyed some lives, capsized and sunk the vessels in the bay; and absolutely tore the clothes from the terrified females, who were forced to fly out of doors. One lady was stripped by the wind to the condition of Eve, when she first walked amid the flowers and saw her image in the rivers of Paradise. Mrs. Rugley resided on "The Peninsula." The scene was there still more terrific and distressing. They had not only Erebus, but Neptune to contend with. The wind overturned their houses, and then blew the waters of the bay over them. Some, even ladies, remained in the water from twelve to twenty-four hours; and all would have been drowned but for the fact, that the wind-driven waves cut channels across the Peninsula, and emptied themselves into the Gulf beyond.

Davis, Rust, and myself, spent a part of the evening in



arguing about the intellectual ability of George Washington. This, you know, is a dangerous topic for me to converse upon. To hear a native-born American citizen, one of the sons of the Father of freedom, attempt to depreciate him, is almost too much for me to bear. These gentlemen had treated me so kindly, that I kept as cool as possible, mixing my argument with only a little of the spices of satire and ridicule. There were, however, children listening, and on their account I made more and stronger remarks than I otherwise would. I presume I resembled somewhat a bear, who should conclude instead of giving his kind keeper the fatal hug, just to scratch his back.

My friends were also Democrats, and you may rest assured, I did not spare that democracy, which thinks it must depreciate George Washington in order to exalt "Tom Jefferson," and the party of his professed disciples. No ill feeling was, however, produced by this conversation. My opponents were noble fellows, and seemed to admire my earnestness and boldness ; and to respect my filial affection for the hero-statesman who "was the first in war, the first in peace," and will be "the first in the hearts of his countrymen" so long as they deserve the freedom he achieved.

January 6th. We parted with mutual regrets, and I "struck off" alone into the prairie. *Alone*, means something here where houses are ten or fifteen miles apart, travellers are rarely met, and the roads frequently fork, or dwindle into cow-paths. After riding a few miles I looked back, and saw a gentleman following me. I alighted and waited till he overtook me. It was Judge R. M. Williamson, of Independence,



"the three-legged man," as he calls himself; and is commonly called from his having a wooden leg and wearing on the same side a full-length leg to his pantaloons, which hangs down from the knee in such a manner as to suggest the idea of a third leg. The judge only travelled with me a few miles, gave me directions as to the route, invited me to visit him as I passed Independence, and turned away, leaving me alone again.

January 6th, Wharton. Yesterday and till noon to-day, I travelled in the prairie which is bounded by the Colorado, and Caney. The houses of the planters are situated in the prairie, from half a mile to a mile from the timber of the bottoms; without a tree or shrub, and sometimes without even a fence around them. The plantations are in the densely-wooded bottoms. About twelve miles from here, quit the prairie, and entered the far-famed Caney bottom. The cotton stalks were very large, and cane doubtless yields enormously. There is no question about its soil, with its peculiar reddish complexion, being extremely fertile. But Mrs. Ramsey says, it is too sickly for the whites to live near it; and I should suppose, from appearances, that Megissogwon, "who sends the fever from the marshes," resided within its fecund bosom, ready to spring forth upon the pioneer, who fells the timber and breaks its surface with the plough.

The foregoing was written in parcels, at Vosburg's, Brenham, and Belton, after rides of thirty and forty miles during the day. Is it possible for me to write under any circumstances worse than I usually do? If so, excuse the preceding exhibition of the worse; and if you can't read, skip it.

It will not do for me to copy my letters to you. I should

correct and fix them up, and then they might appear constrained and formal. Since adopting by your request the journalizing mode, though frequently forgetting it, I do not neglect to pour forth my thoughts, my inward thoughts, as freely as I think them and time permits. Why do you not the same? The artless exposure of the inside of the human soul is always interesting to me. That you have thoughts is evident from the fact, that you can, especially if I am engaged in reading or writing, talk "from morn till dewy eve." You certainly should not be ashamed to write your thoughts, your day dreams to me. You know I am a lenient critic, that I can scarcely tolerate the fastidious fault-finder. You will recollect frequently laughing at my detecting good in the poorest speeches and sermons, particularly if spoken by the young, the humble, or the upright.

How delighted I was at your Canton folio! How disappointed at the New Orleans half-sheet! Let's have no more of the latter, though I have read and re-read that. Sit down every morning—you are too tired and feeble at night—and write down your thoughts and doings, and the doings and sayings of the children during the preceding twenty-four hours. This will require but little time, and you will be astonished at the result. What a delightful *home-feeling* will its daily perusal, till the mail brings another record, cause your way-faring husband, with his indifference to wealth and ambition, and his strong home affections! I am just getting under head way, but eight pages are enough for you to read at once.

Your husband,

WILLIAM ATSON.

## LETTER IX.

Sermon in Texas.—"Sweat."—Thoughts in the prairie.

"The cold, the dead, the beautiful,  
E'en now they silent pass  
Like floating shadows one by one,  
O'er memory's faithful glass."

January 13th, 1856.

DEAR MOLLY :—It is Sunday. I have just returned from church, having heard my first sermon in Texas. The preacher's name is Smith. I presume, from his style of oratory, that he is a Methodist. P. would shrug his shoulders like a Frenchman; C. would smile a sort of negative smile; and you would say, "I prefer hearing Bishop Otey," if you had heard the sermon and were asked how you liked it.

To the same question I should reply, "that the preacher, it is true, was somewhat illiterate and unnecessarily boisterous, but was fluent and sensible, with an earnestness of manner that indicated sincerity; and believing that his preaching was calculated to instruct the more ignorant, and stimulate to good conduct many differently constituted from myself, I could listen patiently and respectfully. The preacher, I learn, is a Cumberland Presbyterian.

I neglected to say, I am at the St. Charles Hotel. You

recollect it, don't you? with its five or six flights of steps, its fine carpets, its spring mattresses, its hundreds of "waiters," its table luxuries?

Ah me! You are thinking of the Crescent City, and I am in Belton, a village of two or three hundred inhabitants, on the flat banks of Noland's Creek, in Texas. Were I at the former, I should feel very differently. If no letter awaited me, the telegraph could soon tell me whether you, and Alice, and Anna, and "Beauty" were well or unwell, dead or alive. Away off here, out of reach of the wires, and expecting no written communication, I feel the absence from home much more acutely than I do in "the States." Nothing but a sense of duty, and the belief that I am serving you all, render these constant pilgrimages bearable.

It is the inexorable doom of every man, without any exception, to live by the sweat of his brow. There is no way to escape it. No matter what circumstances surround him, however high-born, gifted, affluent, man must *sweat*. The only difference between men being, that those who are capable of bearing the sweating process the most cheerfully, generally sweat the least.

This eternal toil for bread and meat used to force out the perspiration from me. I looked forward to the time when it would cease; tried to shorten the interval, and fretted and hurried, hoping I might be enabled to spend the meridian and evening of my life in labours congenial to my feelings and aspirations, blessed with an abundance for ourselves, our children, and the neighbouring poor. This hope has been blasted.



“Work, work, till you die! and work at the very things you despise. Toil for money *by the dime*, you man with noble aspirations, with an enlarged philanthropy, till Death comes! Yes! you lover of philosophy, of literature, of composition, quit them all; support your family, toil for a competency, for money—and you may gain it, but only by *piecemeal*. Work, husband and father! and work amid the tortures of suspense.”

As soon as I read and deciphered this handwriting on the wall, I submitted; and a pleasant perspiration broke forth. I work, work, work,—I toil harder than I ever did before. I sweat too; but the toil has become a pleasure, and the perspiration is easy and natural.

Occasionally a foreboding of evil at home forces out an unnatural drop. I read the inscription again—I look up, the heavens seem to smile, and God seems to say, “Go on, you are in the path of duty. Fear no evil, I will take care of you and yours.” Then the usually calm, deep happiness of my soul surges into a tumult of enjoyment. Nobody knows this; you would never have known it, but for the apparent accident of your requesting me to journalize my letters.

How little do we know of others? Who, seeing me, walking the streets, or buying a cow, or dunning a man, or trading for land, or denouncing a scoundrel to his face, or getting mad because I stumped my toe; or prescribing a blue pill for a fellow who thinks he knows more about medicine than I do, because my prescription is simple, who, I say, seeing these things, supposes that I carry in my bosom so fixed and so cheerful a philosophy? Perhaps the apparently stupid fellow,



for whom I prescribe, or with whom I trade, has, too, some holy aspirations, some high, and mighty, and pleasant thoughts dwelling in the arcana of his nature, which he has never shaped into words, or considers too sacred for utterance.

Does that clear mind of yours swim and struggle through a sea of thoughts before it arrives at its usually correct conclusions? Or does it fly over to them like a beautiful bird? Or does it reach them by intuition? How is this? Analyze your own mental operations, and tell me all about them. The analysis will unfold you to yourself, enlarge the area of your vision; amuse and improve you.

(Sunday meditations interrupted by Shelton.) The thread of thought being severed, I will, though I have just ended another thirty mile ride, return and proceed with the journal.

January 6th. Arrived in Wharton, met a gentleman, asked him where was the hotel? He made a gesture indicating that he was deaf. I met him at Mrs. Menefee's, and discovered, that he was also dumb. He pulled out his pocket-slate and pencil; and by means of these, we held quite a conversation. McKinley, I believe, was his name. He and another mute from New York were travelling through Texas, giving pantomimic exhibitions, illustrative of the language of signs, and the various human passions. Wharton is a very small place, and on the decline.

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January 7th. Arranged my matters, and was introduced by J. Rust, Esq., to a Mr. Deaderick, who kindly drew me a plan of my route, for some distance, in order to prevent my

getting lost in the houseless region, into which I was about to advance.

The morning was pleasant. It was too warm for cloak or blanket. I threw them across the saddle and paced off. In a few moments I drew on my blanket. In less than an hour I had to put on my cloak also; and by the time I fairly entered the wide prairie that stretches its long, unbroken level for forty or fifty miles between the wooded bottoms of the Colorado and the Brazos, Boreas had become furious, and was blowing his icy breath in unceasing gusts, athwart the treeless and shrubless plain, seemingly concentrating his vengeance upon me, the solitary traveller in that bleak domain. I thought for a moment of home, and fire, saw there was no chance to back out, and determined to face the monster cheerfully. I hooped and hallooed, startling the cranes, the wild geese and the deer with the verberations of my voice. I held conversations with myself, made speeches, repeated poetry, and caused the savage wilderness to resound with my invocations and thanks to that Being, whose name had probably never before been reverently pronounced within it. I evoked the images of the living and the dead. Rarely, if ever, before did they come so quickly and so distinctly to my call. Away off, there, *alone*, I felt their association to be delightful; and thanked God from the very depths of my soul that I had no reason to fear any being in his Universe, whether it approached as man, woman, angel, ghost.

My memory and imagination seemed to be rendered more acute by this battle with Boreas. The Past with its minutest

features clearly delineated, travelled on my right, and on my left rode his beautiful daughter, the Future.

My horse is a bay, with white spots. This reminded me of "Spot," pa's favourite filly, over the neck of whose blind mother, "the old sorrel mare," I used to turn summersets when a boy, as she stumbled and fell over the large chips from the hewed logs that lay in the paths and roads of West Tennessee, when West Tennessee was a forest, and the people built log cabins. Thinking of his favourite filly, reminded me of my father, with his white cravat, his blue cloth suit, his Quaker-cut coat, his jet black hair, his dark and piercing eyes, *his transcendent honesty*, which rendered him almost incapable of doing himself justice, either in trading, or in rehearsing a transaction about which he differed with another—so afraid was he of doing injustice to that other, especially if absent; of his deep, abiding, unvarying, consistent piety, whose motto was, *In doubtful matters, err on the safe side; particularly if that error involves self-sacrifice.*

I have an extensive and intimate acquaintance with members of all the churches. In many of them I have confidence; but my father was the only person I ever knew with whom John Wesley could have found no fault. It is not possible that any one ever could have been more pious. He attended to the smaller, and did not neglect the weightier, matters of the law. His judgment was good, and his heart, I believe, was perfect in the sight of God.

He taught me, in his firm, affectionate way, many a useful lesson; but of all the lessons I ever learned from his holy lips, or his Christ-like example, there are none I prize more highly,

none which have been more serviceable to me, none that I would prefer to have engraved on the minds and hearts of my children than the following :

Get all the light you can—then do what *you*, not other people, think right.

If you have a series of duties to perform to-day, perform the most disagreeable first.

Thinking about my father always evokes the image of my honest, strong-souled, and sincerely devout mother. As I wrote her from Cincinnati, “affection for her is a part of my nature.” No sort of treatment, however unjust, could eradicate it. I believe it would stand any test that the dear old lady could be induced to apply. May the span of her life be lengthened ! May the evening of her days be gilded with every earthly blessing, and cheered by every heavenly hope !

Thinking of the parents brought up the children.

“Elly,” the first child whose sweet ways arrested my boyish attention and touched my boyish heart, appeared in girlhood’s budding loveliness before me. Mary and Annie were too near my own age for their childhood to charm me. But the prattle of Elly haunts my memory with its sweet music. Her young ambition—her first efforts at composition—her gentle enthusiasm—her deep affection for “brother”—her sudden death, hastened, I sometimes think, by that brother not being an older physician—force forth, at this distant period, a sigh ; and excite a yearning to *know* whether we shall again see and recognise the departed. My sweet, my affectionate sister, cut down in the spring-time of thy beautiful life ; it seems that I



feel, even now, the touching, sacred, softening influences of thy lovely presence.

Mr. Lamb's house, his family, the school girls—Doctor Higgins arriving just after Elly had begun to sink into the collapse of death; and Carry, lying in an adjacent room, calm, and patient, though dangerously ill—these scenes, one and all, rise palpably before me. Carry and Annie's studying under brother's superintendence—the one trudging from Mrs. Gracey's in Tennessee, to Mr. Ransom's school—the other, satchel in hand, gliding over the smooth, clean sidewalks in Philadelphia, from Mrs. Willis's to the Misses Young—their affection and respect for that "brother;" his deep love for them; his earnest efforts for their good; his occasional harshness in words, *never in act*; their association with him when children; their development into intelligent and beautiful women, admired wherever known; and their deaths, in the very bloom of young womanhood, away from that "brother," who was then an old physician—are memories fresh, vital, stirring as the incidents of yesterday.

And Willie, the noble-looking boy, the paragon of infantile beauty. Little traveller through this world, short as was your sojourn here, you will not be forgotten. Mother, and sisters, and father, and others who saw thy young beauty, will talk of thee while they live, and hope to meet thy bright spirit hereafter.

Amid all these imaginings, amid all my thoughts, in solitude or in society, idle or busy, the images of certain sweet, human faces, are always visible. They are those of wife and children. For them I absent myself from home and comfort.



For them I shiver in "the norther." For them vanity is sacrificed, and ambition has ceased even to be a dream. The reflection that I am working for them makes trouble a pleasure, and sacrifice a luxury.

January 21, 1856. I am now at Lavaca, in the sitting-room, with several men talking around me. Thus, all I write to you, is written, sometimes during the fatigue of a long days' ride, and generally in the midst of bustle and confusion. This is a sociable country. The people seem to take a quick liking to "the Doctor," and frequently talk to me so that I can only write a few lines before having to stop. Were it not for this, how much do you suppose I would write? Are you not glad that something arrests this cacoethes scribendi with which I am attacked when I start to talk to you with the pen?

I have travelled over five hundred miles in Texas. This is the second letter of eight or ten pages I have written you, and have not yet gotten thirty miles from Wharton. I shall try to curtail the history of my travels; and will now, as my paper is "out," stop for the present. Kiss the brats, and accept *the same* for yourself.

Yours, affectionately,

WILLIAM ATSON.

## LETTER X.

Atson's religious dogmas.—Tom Moore's theology corrected.—Life is a battle.—Men make themselves miserable.—Old women long for misery. The way to transact business rapidly.—*Our* flowers.

LAVACA, Texas, January 22, 1856.

DEAR MOLLY:—On yesterday I closed a letter to you, expecting to start to "Powder Horn" to-day, and take a steamer for Galveston and New Orleans. To-day the dread that the steamer will miss a trip, and not leave till next Saturday, is ripening into a woful certainty. This is a grievous disappointment. I had ridden hard and steadily through "wind and weather," in order to reach port in time for to-morrow's steamer. I expected also by Thursday to be in Galveston, reading letters from home. As it is, I must stay here in the "San Antonio House," where I can only get the benefit of a fire by sitting in the "bar-room;" though the snow is falling in light flakes upon the frozen ground.

I have but little business, and the week must be spent. The suspense is well nigh over—the still flickering hope of starting to-morrow is about extinguished. And in order to make the days fly past, instead of dragging their slow length along, I shall occupy every spare moment. Miserable must be the man,

who, possessing health and the five senses, cannot make himself comfortable in the midst of society and plenty, with books, pen, thought, and conversation, to quiet restlessness and expel ennui.

In my letter of yesterday, I was telling you of the sweet company that travelled with me through the prairie. Of all my thoughts I cannot tell you. To attempt this would require disquisitions of "learned length and thundering sound" on God, Christ, religion, philosophy; and nothing would induce me to drown your pure faith in a sea of metaphysical speculation. The only dogmas in my creed are, that God is wise and good, that He will take care of the humble and the honest; and that no religion can be the true one, which is not calculated to make its possessor happier and better. Thinking of these things brought to mind a beautiful song of Tom Moore—and as the sound of the poetic words were lost in the distance, it seemed to me to be a pity that so good a poet should have been so poor a theologian; and such a harsh judge of his race as to have used the words "illusion" and "deceitful," when it would have been so easy for him to have written,

This world is all a fleeting show,  
For man's *probation* given;  
The smiles of joy, the tears of woe  
*Do for a moment* shine and flow—  
There's nothing true but heaven.

Thus, with the music of my thoughts, I faced the music of the

"Wind which for no creature careth,  
Yet stealeth sweets from everything."

And it is a singular fact, that, owing to this extra exertion to keep from being cold and miserable, the time flew by the fastest; yes, I was the happiest on those days when the raving norther, which does, and did, during my tour, freeze people to death, was blowing most coldly and most fiercely about me.

I wish I could teach my little girls that life is a battle, instituted by God merely to test our courage, and develop our energies; and should be fought as earnestly and as cheerfully as the stern warrior fights,

“When honour’s eye is on daring deeds,  
And fame is there to tell who bleeds.”

The older I get, the more I see of the world, the oftener I ask, *what is the use of being unhappy?* The sour, grumbling man, looks at me with astonishment; and I try delicately to prescribe for him, by telling how little it takes to make me happy; how I extract the honey from every flower, eschew the poison, gulp down the medicine quickly, forget the disagreeable, dwell upon the pleasant, and think about God.

Men make themselves miserable *by sliding* into bad habits; but woman, without any bad habits, as she grows old, seems to long for misery as the hunted hart for the cooling water-brook. She shuts her ears to consolatory sounds, and listens only to doleful music. If a friend, a husband, a child dies, instead of weeping with that tender melancholy, which is made pleasant by the reflections—if a man die he shall live again; and if we all live we shall meet again—she hugs despair to her bosom, supposing it to be disrespectful to the departed not to be mis-

erable; when the departed, if her friend, and not a scoundrel, must sincerely desire her to be happy.

Now I do not intend for you or my daughters to be old women of this stamp. I should regard your misery as disrespectful to me, and ingratitude to your Creator. The Deity, being better than I am, may "let you off" more easily; but you know I won't take the slightest insult from any one. So begin at once to resist the proneness of your woman's nature to search for misery, and let me find you cheerful amid the perplexities of your domestic cares. Seek after happiness, and the wrinkles may furrow forehead and cheeks, the eyes lose their lustre, the beauty pass away like a dream—but your heart will remain fresh, healthy, and young.

POWDER HORN, January 23, 1856.\*

Heavens! how garrulous I am! But there's no harm in being so—I am only talking to my "better half." A change of position stopped this garrulity yesterday. At the last moment, a gentleman I was waiting to see, arrived. My business was soon arranged—the stage drove up, I jumped in, and arrived here last night after ten o'clock. I made this move against the earnest protestations and plausible arguments of mine host, and other Lavaca acquaintances. To which I replied, that my duty was to be here ready for the steamer. If she didn't come, that was her business, not mine.

To this obstinate and energetic adherence to the safest course, I attribute mainly my success as a traveller. I have

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\* The reader will please recollect that he is reading letters generally begun with the intention of being finished on a sheet of paper.



been in Texas twenty-two or three days, have in that short period travelled about four hundred miles on horseback, and one hundred and fifty by stage; and attended to a large amount of business as well as if I had taken three months. Having made provision for changes of weather, no degree of inclemency stopped me. The polite, earnest, firm representation to each man with whom I had business, that I was a stranger, away from home, in a hurry to return, and must be attended to, induced every one to give me their immediate and undivided attention until a settlement was effected. Thus it was I got along so rapidly. And but for the stoppage of a steamer to be repaired, I should soon be floating over the green waters of the Gulf *letterwards*, if not homewards.

Unless thoughts properly appertain to a journal, I am completely off the track, and I will try to find my way back to it in the next.

It is useless for me to follow the old form of sending my love to you and the three flowers blooming around you. May God gild *your* life with every blessing compatible with your true interests! May the summer not wither the spring beauty of *our* flowers; and autumn's yellow tints increase their loveliness!

Yours affectionately,

WILLIAM ATSON.

## LETTER XI.

Took the wrong road.—Tobacco.—A woman smoker.—Dipping young ladies.—Cranes.—Wild geese and deer.—Hilly Prairie.

Cassimir House, January 23, 1856.

DEAR MOLLY :—(January 7, 1856.)—Left Wharton and travelled to “Misther” Vosbuygh’s; didn’t get lost but once, and then was directed by *a woman*.

“Oh woman, woman, what a book of folly  
Thou dost cause in man.”

It was only for a few minutes that I wandered in the wrong direction. The road I should have taken was concealed by water, and the one I did take soon ended. At its termination I found a negro wagoner, who had cut his way thither to get a load of wood. He showed me the right path. In ten minutes I should have been wrong again, but happened—that’s not the right word, but I’ll let it stand—to meet a boy, who cautioned me against a right hand road, which otherwise I should most certainly have taken.

Thus it was I did not make an important mistake the whole route. I either guessed right, though the poorest of woodsmen, or met some one in the nick of time: a coincidence deemed exceedingly fortunate, where houses are so far apart, and wayfarers so scarce.

To-day, and previously, I had worn my cloak over my blanket. The wind blew the former about so, I determined to reverse this plan, and also to get Mrs. Vosbuygh to sew strings on it. She did so, and was in other respects very polite and kind. Is it not a pity, after making so favourable an impression, she should let me see her smoking a cigar? With all my sight-seeing I never saw this sight before.

As I neither chew tobacco, smoke, nor drink liquor, I am under no obligation to defend men who *cultivate* those habits; and I will not defend them. On the contrary, I tell them they are *slaves*, abject slaves, not of one good owner, but of three bad masters. I philosophize on the moral and physical impossibility of outside, artificial stimulants affording happiness, because of the inevitable consequent depression. I dwell on the luxury of good health, a natural flow of spirits bubbling out of a body that wants nothing but food and raiment. I jocosely call them miserable wretches. Laugh at them about their eternal wants—tobacco now, then a cigar, then liquor, then water. On account of the former wanting the last often enough to torture to death a man who has realized the luxury of abstinence from vice, and temperance in eating. I picture to them not only the torture of *wanting*, but the anxiety and misery of being “out,” and unable to get the tobacco, the cigars, the brandy, to suit their refined or vitiated taste. Thus I “run on” to tobacco chewing, cigar smoking, drinking, spitting men, and they take it kindly, for two reasons: one is, I do it affectionately, and evidently from good motives, with none of the formality of the lecturer. The other is, that if anybody takes any exception to anything he

says, this mild-mannered, rather timid sort of talking man, in the twinkling of an eye is metamorphosed into one with a fighting, "go to the devil" look and tone, which soon convinces the objector that there is no whining, no cant in his composition.

But it is pity that enlists my feelings in behalf of my suffering-seeking and enslaved brothers. I regard the aberrations of woman in an entirely different light. Man is, and was designed to be, a coarser animal. We expect, we pardon coarseness in him. But woman is more delicately organized, intellectually, morally, and physically. God made her to be the helpmate of man—not to drag him down, but to lift him up. Christianity restored her to her pristine condition for the same purpose. She is, emphatically, the salt of the earth; and if the salt loses its savour, wherewith shall it be salted? If man learns not from his mother, from woman, the highest standard of practical human purity, who will teach it to him?

What, therefore, is a vice in man, is a crime in woman.

I dislike indelicacy, immodesty, vulgarity in men; but it makes me blush for the whole sex to see any exhibitions of this kind by a woman. Smoking, chewing, snuffing, dipping, drinking, are all, morally considered, the same habit—the habit of resorting to artificial stimuli for enjoyment, instead of depending on common sense, nature, and God. Being identical in principle, how can a mother, wife, or sister, tell son, husband, brother, he can and ought to quit drinking, when she can't quit smoking or dipping.

At Boston's, near Austin, where I "spent a night," his daughter, a rosy-cheeked girl of sixteen or seventeen, and



another handsome, sensible young lady of the same age, came into the sitting-room with snuff-boxes and tooth-brushes, hard at work, rubbing their pearly teeth, and *spitting*!

I thought of my daughters, and how grateful I would be to any one who would even try to rescue them from the edge of the precipice of a bad habit; and kindly and affectionately told them I was an old doctor, and the father of little girls, who would after a while be grown young ladies; that as one deeply interested in the welfare of their sex, they must permit me to advise them as a friend and as a physician. I did so. They had thoughtlessly begun the practice of this evil, and seeing the consequences, pledged me their word they would stop before the habit became fixed.

Writing this to you, who don't smoke, chew, snuff, dip, nor *spit*, and will not even drink half as much as I prescribe for you, would be very absurd, were it not that, when writing to the mother, I am always thinking about the delicate little trio that cluster about her.

The dipping young ladies just alluded to were ignorant of the indelicacy, the vulgarity, the misery of the habit they were acquiring. Our children, unless instructed, may ignorantly begin that, or a worse one, and not discover their error until completely *enslaved*.

January 8. With cloak on, well tied, and blanket over that, I started early in the frosty morning, and plunged cheerfully into the icy air-bath. In a short time I began to leave the level prairie, through which I had travelled about a hundred miles, with nothing external to interest me but the flocks of cranes, the wild geese, and the agile deer.



The latter is a beautiful sight. You are two hundred yards distant. The herd is quietly and fearlessly grazing. You are now fifty yards nearer. One of them sees or scents approaching danger. He lifts his head high in air, turns his broad, white tail erectly up, looks about with an intelligent scrutiny, wheels half around, places one fore-foot in advance, arranges body and limbs for a race, stands a moment, and then, according to his conclusion as to the imminence of the danger, either trots off a short distance, and stops and looks again, or runs away. The others, in the mean time, follow suit, according to their own individual conclusions. Now, these pauses, these apparently intelligent observations, calculations, reasonings, are very interesting; and these preparatory and primary motions are exquisitely graceful.

I now began to ascend the hilly prairie. Before, all the timber was in the bottoms of the Brazos and the Colorado. Here forest began to alternate with prairie—the former first usurping the ascendancy, then the latter: The extent of each so varying as to present to the eye by turns “motts of timber” and islands of prairie: the undulations of the ground and the position of the trees being so arranged as rarely to obstruct the vision. For the greater part of ten miles I could see the white houses of Belleville.

Up to this point I had not admired Texas. I had just sent word to old Doctor Wright, by a negro, with whom I scraped up an acquaintance last night, that if he wished “sensible” inscribed on his tombstone, he should move back to Tennessee. Now, however, I could not deny that the scenery was pretty. “Hills over hills, a surging scene, only limited by the blue

distance"—it could not be otherwise. When spring paints the earth green, and hangs new leaves upon the trees, it must be beautiful.

The steamer "Charles Morgan" has just arrived; and with the expression of a hope that I may soon kiss you, Alice, and the little prattlers, I will, for the present, say "good bye."

*Yours and theirs,*

WILLIAM ATSON.



## LETTER XII.

Brenham, landlord, Washington.—"Bob Wilkins."—Country between Washington and Independence.—India rubber.—McChristy's.—Caldwell.—David Higgason.

POWDER HORN, January 24, 1856.

DEAR MOLLY:—(January 9). Stayed at Brenham last night after a ride of forty miles. The landlord was from Tennessee, was a schoolmate of Archibald Wright, Esq., had a very pretty daughter who sat at the head of the table; and a plenty to eat; but, "good heavens," how dirty everything was! Recollect he came from your part of Tennessee, not mine. From the latter I saw some persons who were quite neat.

I didn't fancy L. much at first. His eye was keen, his chin square, his voice firm, his sentiments stern. He talked too much, and was too much in favour of hanging his fellow-creatures. One good act of his, however, came under my observation during one night's sojourn beneath his roof. A young man, travelling with fruit trees to sell, who thought himself

"keen as a briar," urged him to play cards with him, offering to bet his trees. L. finally consented to play, and won without difficulty. The next morning he told the young man if he would promise not to gamble any more he would not only give him back the trees, but buy some of him. Whether the promise was made I do not know, but as I rode off L. was selecting trees, and said he was buying them.

To-day travelled to Washington, and called on Bob Wilkins. You know I dislike to have my plans thwarted, and that mere social visiting is with me almost a moral impossibility. So I hesitated about going three or four miles out of the way, to make this visit. The reflection, that to pass by this old friend would not be doing to him as I would have him do to me, were our situations reversed, turned the wavering scale, and to his house I went. Bob and his wife received me with friendly warmth, and I would not have succeeded in getting away the next morning but by exerting all my firmness, and whenever he insisted upon my staying, calling him "Jim Wilkins."\*

My extensive association with men, and their uniform kindness to me, has thawed that seeming indifference to others with which ignorance of human nature and an excess of sensitiveness had incrustated my soul. I was afraid of being in the way. I disliked presumption, and feared to presume upon people's liking me. I saw no peculiar attractions about myself—I see none now. Experience has, however, demonstrated the fact that my acquaintances, old and new, do like me. At any

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\* "Jim Wilkins" was remarkable for his pertinacious hospitality—though his good judgment is only surpassed by his true soul.

rate they treat me with such confidence, with such practical cordiality, with such a regard for my comfort and convenience, so different from and superior to mere etiquette, that though it might *seem smart*, it would be *really mean*, to doubt their sincerity.

These views, coupled with the conclusion that it is better to be happy than smart, are working a change within me. They have taught me that clanship is an incubus upon hospitality, and that a love of self-communion may be indulged to excess. I am now not too proud to let a man see that I like him, although I may not be certain that the liking is reciprocated. I am now not ashamed to give such a one little, delicate, *advance* evidences of my esteem. I can now, according to circumstances, with pleasure retire into the deep sabbath of my nature, or mingle in society, allowing the keys of my heart to give back music to the touches of kindness, audible to every performer.

January 10. I *would* start; and, although the day was cold, "Bob" rode with me eight or nine miles. His cottage is delightfully situated on a high hill, in the midst of live-oaks. Beneath, and in front, visible for fifteen miles, lies the wooded bottom of the Brazos. In the rear, extending to Independence, twelve miles distant, stretches a country much more worthy of Coleridge's description than that to which I applied it. The hills are higher, and instead of post-oak, live-oak and cedar trees assume dominion in the bosom of the rolling prairie. The term "pretty" would not apply to the scenery here. It is too grand for that. One who has travelled over the mountains of old Virginia, or seen the foam and heard the roar of



Niagara's cataract; or stood in the green vale where the Arve and Arveiron "rave ceaselessly," and gazed upwards at Chamouny's glassy glaciers glittering in the sunlight—would scarcely call it *sublime*. But, with these landscapes impressed upon my memory, or pictured on my imagination, I must and will assert it to be *magnificently beautiful*. "Hills over hills, a surging scene only limited by the blue distance," repeated and studied, until you comprehend, realize, feel, see the picture the poet presents with such wonderful condensation, will give you an exact daguerreotype of this romantic region, if you allow "the blue distance" to mingle with and gradually lose itself in that peculiar and indescribable hue, more beautiful than the blue of sea or sky, which the circumference of distant forests always assumes. After shaking Wilkins's friendly hand I was again alone. Being at his house had caused the home-feeling to come over me. To have stayed with him a day would have been as foolish as Hannibal's long delay at Capua. When I again started, riding on horseback would have been more disagreeable, the wind would have seemed colder, the clouds more threatening, and getting wet and sleeping between dirty sheets more horrible. So on I went.

As I alighted in Independence the light shower, which had just commenced, became more copious. I purchased another umbrella, having lost the old one, and an India rubber suit. How I do hate to buy anything for myself while honesty requires me to permit you to economize! I believe I would have taken the rain rather than incurred this expense, had it not been for the fear of getting sick, and thus becoming a tax



upon, instead of being the supporter of, you and ours. In the afternoon I travelled nearly twenty-five miles. It rained most of the time, and was so cold that the rain froze on my umbrella whilst falling, rendering the cambric so stiff that I could not close it till the ice had been thawed by the fire. I stopped at McChristy's just before sundown. His house was a little log hut with a shed behind, and he was not at home. His wife and son said I could stay, if willing to "put up" with their poor accommodations. It was seven miles to Caldwell, and no house on the road. I had ridden my horse fast, and was not unwilling to rest myself. So I not only accepted their proposition, but did so cheerfully.

After waiting two long hours I was invited to a supper of weak coffee without milk sweetened in the coffee pot, coarse corn bread, and a little badly fried meat. I eat like I had been used to nothing better, although I had a nice snack in my saddle-bags, put there by Mrs. Wilkins. Confound a man, I say, who will unnecessarily hurt the feelings of any one who is evidently trying to serve him.

January 11. Not raining, but cloudy and cold. Reached town by breakfast time, requested the landlady to sew up my leggins, and send for David Higgason, whom I have known from boyhood's hour. He was delighted to see me himself, and would take me to see his wife and family. I sent the former word that she must come right out, I had thirty odd miles to travel that day, and couldn't wait for hair combing, dressing, &c., and out she and her daughters came. Now what do you think, all the way going to the house I was discussing in my own mind the question, whether I had ever

known this wife David was so anxious for me to see. Her face dispelled all doubt. It was as familiar to me as yours. Had I not known her for years? Had I not often stood with her by the bedside of the sick? *Wasn't* I glad I had not intimated my doubts to her husband? It would, I know, have distressed her, and destroyed the pleasure of our meeting had she been aware that I had been so forgetful of her. My sheet is full.

Yours and the children's,

WILLIAM ATSON.



### LETTER XIII.

Texas.—Little River.—Ferryman.—A party.—Treacherous agent.—A knave is a fool.—Belton.—An Arcadian vale.—Let's move to Texas.

Cassimir House, January 24, 1856.

January 11. Travelled over forty miles, arrived in Cameron about sunset, crossed Little River—it is little sure enough—in a boat, and rode off without paying ferriage. The black ferryman was, I suppose, too polite to remind me of my forgetfulness. A party was to be given that night at his master's on the opposite bank. The belles and beaux from the village were on their way to the frolic. I requested one of the latter to tell the polite negro I would leave the dime with the hotel-keeper. The next morning at breakfast it was reported that more whiskey had just been sent for, and the revellers were still whirling through the mazes of the giddy dance.

January 12. Started early, rode into Belton about 4 o'clock P. M., and accidentally met my correspondent Arthur Fannill, Esq., of S. He was very polite; and yet there was an uneasiness about him, a disposition to hang around me, a manifest regret that I had taken the trouble at such an unfavourable time for selling, to come so far out of the way to examine my land, even after I had assured him that other business brought me to Texas, which excited a suspicion of his integrity. I made repeated inquiries as to his character, and the responses were all favourable, so much so, that I almost concluded to consider the suspicion erroneous.

It was arranged that he and I should ride out to the land together. On Sunday I attended church, met with and introduced myself to Mr. Shelton, whose home-tract adjoins mine. He invited me to his house, and there I spent the night. Monday morning I rode to see the squatters on my land. One of them is a good religious old lady. The other, her brother-in-law, appears to be a plain, polite, rough, sensible, honest man. They were evidently fearful that I would blame them for the destruction of my timber. I afterwards learned who cut and hauled it away. Timber, you know, is scarce, and consequently valuable, in this state. Fannill had been the main depredator, and had never commenced his depredations until he began to act as my agent. While complaining to me of others, he was the leader of the robber band. My informants had protested against his course; and he had silenced them by saying he was my agent, and presumed he knew what was right; other evidence confirmed their allegation. I was really indignant and sorry: indignant that a man of Fannill's

intelligence should stoop so low as to betray his trust for so small a boon; sorry that he should be silly enough to be mean.

It is very common to hear people say, "that fellow is a great rascal, but he is very smart." This is almost universally a mistake. The fellow has a kind of deceptive mental sprightliness, but no real intellectual profundity. A far-sighted man, especially in a civilized country, must see that rascality "won't pay." I employed a lawyer of Austin to teach Fannill this fact. My tract is a much better one, too, than it had been represented to be. Out of the thousand acres, nearly three hundred are as level and as rich as they can be, the balance is covered with timber; and though somewhat rocky and hilly, would be considered superb land in Tennessee—while the rocks are as valuable as the timber for fencing and building. Only about forty acres of the cedar is burnt, and that is not ruined. Fannill reported it to be all burned up.

On account of the drought last year, the crops in this vicinity failed. This has rendered corn scarce and high. In consequence of these things emigrants pass by, and the price of land has fallen.

Belton is unfortunately located in a low place. It may eventually extend over the adjacent hills. Some of the houses are beautiful. There are two kinds of rock in this region which are suitable for building purposes. Both abound on my place; one is hard, the other soft. The latter can be shaped, like wood, by means of saw and plane. It is as beautiful as marble, and so substantial that some construct the entire house of it.



The country around the village is watered by Noland's Creek, the Leon, and Lampases—lovely streams, whose transparent waters flow over rocky bottoms. The scenery is beautiful—prairie and woodland, woodland and prairie somewhat similar to that previously described.

But I must now take you out to my and Shelton's lands. Nature made them one, and if I were rich they should remain undivided. Look! you are in a valley—not an undulation roughens its surface; neither shrub nor tree obstruct your vision; Noland's crystal stream winds and murmurs through its bosom; gently rounded hills, covered with cedar and live-oak, with ever and anon a white rock peeping through their evergreen foliage, circumscribe it.

Go to some lonely and sequestered spot, in the quiet of a Sabbath evening, and drink in this scene with your eye —

I was enchanted. To call it pretty would be a libel. It was not sublime, it was not magnificently beautiful. It was exquisitely lovely; and its loveliness was entirely feminine. It touched my heart "like the light of a dark eye in woman." Dim old memories revived. Scenes, and images with pleasant and not unfamiliar countenances, as though they might or might not have been acquaintances long ago, floated indistinctly about me. I thought of Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob tending their flocks; of David, the shepherd boy, playing the harp in the green vales amid the vine-clad hills of Palestine; of the cedars of Lebanon; of the Georgics of Virgil; of the minstrelsy of Homer, the old, blind, wandering Grecian bard; of Orpheus, Apollo, and Arcadian landscapes.

I was in love with my property, and nothing but poverty



could induce me to sell it. It affords me pleasure to know that I possess such a picturesque spot of earth. The remembrance of its beauty enchants the eye of the mind, as the remembrance of Jenny Lind's singing does the ear of the soul.

Health too dwells in the hills, and reigns over the valley. This section of the country is also fine for stock; and more money can be made with a small capital, I believe, at stock-raising here, than at almost anything else in any other place.

What say you to moving to this "valley of seclusion," and living apart from the turmoil of the world? Would it not be delightful? Think of it for a moment. In the pleasant evening we could descend from our tiny white stone cottage amid the trees, and with you by my side I could sit piping the pastoral reed, on the bank of Noland's crystal stream, listen to its gentle murmur, and watch the children bathing in its waters, the cattle grazing in the vale, the sheep sporting beneath the evergreens on the hills around, and "the blue sky o'erarching all."

Then as the sun went down, go up, take a frugal repast; and when the sheep and the cattle had lain down to rest, and sleep, "the sweet restorer," was recruiting the energies of the servants fatigued with honest toil, and visiting the little ones with sweet dreams, we'd walk out in the breezy night and view the same scene by the quiet starlight.

"Dost thou like the picture?"

I should be in favour of making it a reality, if our children were sons instead of daughters, and I was willing for you to waste your sweetness on the desert air.

Yours affectionately,

WILLIAM ATSON.

## LETTER XIV.

A Dutchman.—Consult the feelings of your horse.—A new way to rest one.—Texas legislature.—Politics.—A speech short as the “Veni vidi vici” letter.—Music at Boston’s.—A delightful family.—A horse trade, and the Author in love again.

Cassimir House, POWDER HORN, January 25, 1856.

DEAR MOLLY :—I “left off” at Belton, and now start there.

January 14, 1856. Rode over my land, finished my own and Smith & Co.’s business by mid-day, and travelled twenty miles in the afternoon. During the whole trip had previously overtaken no one travelling in the same direction. At Mrs. King’s I found a *hack*-driver, who had been “carrying” a Methodist preacher and family to his circuit or station, returning to Austin. He was a Dutchman. I told the anecdote of his cholera-seared countryman, and asked him if he had caught “the Mettodis.” He was greatly diverted at the success of the parson in praying off his hotel bills; evidently forgetting that the workman is worthy of his hire.

January 15. The driver desired my company, and I wished to get out of the cold wind and rest from riding horse-back. So I hitched my horse behind, and seated myself within his Jersey-wagon. Spot led finely. I however was so fearful it would fatigue him more than being rode, I did not deter-

mine to indulge long in the luxury of this change, till after discovering, by a resort to my watch, that though the Dutchman's big grays were apparently travelling at a greatly increased speed, we were really going very little faster than my usual gait. The next day I was surprised to find Spot as spirited as though he had been resting, instead of pacing after the hack. I had not heard then that they carry the mail from El Paso to San Antonio, seven hundred miles, by means of a number of mules, or horses, who travel the entire distance with only a stoppage of two or three hours occasionally, they being rested and their energies recruited mainly by being transferred, by turns, from the drudgery of pulling the wagon to the luxury of being led behind, or driven before it. A driver told me, seriously, he had known mules so broken down they could no longer pull advantageously, restored in this way to their original vigour during the trip.

Reached Austin, forty miles from King's, before sundown. There was one daily disappointment to me about Texas miles, which was exceedingly agreeable. They were represented to be long; I invariably found them short. I arrived everywhere sooner than I anticipated. Imagine the pleasantness of saying, "one more hour to stiffen in this hard saddle, to shiver in this cold breeze, to endure the excruciating agony of this everlasting pace;" and in half the time finding yourself snugly ensconced in a warm room, comfortably seated before a blazing, big-log fire.

Having business with sundry legislators, went up to the capitol after tea to see them.

A democratic meeting, preliminary to "the state conven-

tion" for nominating candidates, had been appointed for that evening. Regarding the meeting as private, I designed retiring before its organization; but my new acquaintances invited me to stay, although I told them I was "an old-line Whig."

The meeting was very orderly, and the speeches were short, spicy, and well calculated to rouse up the energies of that spoils-seeking, political Jesuit, called by its friends "Democracy," and by its enemies "Locofocoism."

The speakers treated Whiggery, as they do Clay *since his death*, with great respect:—they traced its origin to Federalism, but spoke affectionately and somewhat eloquently of its honesty, its candour, its courage. "Know-Nothingism," said they, is Whiggery in disguise, with all of its errors and none of its heroism.

Their speeches, especially those of Judge Mills and W. R. Scurry, "done pretty well," as I afterwards remarked, considering that no one was allowed to answer them. I said the meeting was very orderly. It was so with one exception. A drinking-fellow named Pierson, arose, and delivered the following speech:—

"Mr. Chairman! I wish my name recorded as the delegate from Grimes, the G-d damnedest Know-Nothing county in Texas. I am here as the representative of the *fifteen Democrats* who live in it."

Returned to the hotel after hearing three or four speeches, and slept in a cold room occupied by seven men besides myself.

January 16. Saw several Tennessee acquaintances, paid taxes on my land, transacted Smith & Co.'s business, and rode



in the afternoon to Boston's, another Tennesseean. There the dipping young ladies, Jim, and Woods entertained me with "fa sol la," in the sitting-room, a negro played the fiddle in an outhouse, and a Jack brayed in the stable.

January 17. Travelled through Lockhart to Prairielea, thirty-two or three miles. Arranged my business with H. M. & Co., and was ready for writing to you at night and an early start on the morrow. I drew out ink, pen, and paper, but McCord, the hotel-keeper, was a Tennesseean, so was his wife, and so was "Pony's" brother; and Me and he talked pen, ink, and paper back into saddle-bags. Having petitioned for early breakfast, I felt glad that they were sufficiently considerate to retire by bedtime.

January 18. Started for Seguin, eighteen miles distant. A gentle rain soon began. I drew on India rubbers and hoisted umbrella. Arrived at Seguin by noon.

After dinner mounted the faithful Spot again and journeyed on. In the morning I travelled mostly through timber, and the breeze blew gently behind me. In the afternoon the wind whistling across the prairie, rushed furiously into my face. Its force was so great as to break my umbrella, and much of the remaining way the rain poured upon my unprotected hat.

"Mr. Duncan keeps entertainment in a log-house on the right hand side of the road." Guided by these directions, I rode up to his plain-looking cabin about sunset, expecting nothing extra. I was however cheered by something more than a blazing fire when I entered the plain parlour, which had that indescribable air of gentility that you can, without seeing, almost feel; and saw the mother, a pleasant young-



looking *lady*, and her handsome married daughter, and her three small daughters of the ages and sizes of our three, the second being something like Anna, the youngest decidedly resembling Nellie. Mr. Duncan was absent, but the son-in-law seemed worthy of his wife and her family.

I had a long beard, my face was burnt almost black by the wind, and my clothes were not the cleanest. "The thought struck me" that these folks must be very discriminating if they can detect the gentleman in me. My usual nonchalance did not, however, desert me. The supper, the parlour, and the books on the parlour-table indicated civilization. I spoke of the warm batter-cakes, the fresh butter, and the sweet milk as old acquaintances, met unexpectedly and joyfully in a strange land. They took "The National Intelligencer," and I talked of Whiggery. They were from old Virginia. So was I. They were fond of music, I descanted on the angel-tones of Jenny Lind. They were fond of books, I discoursed of literature and art. By bedtime we were *all* friends, and to tell you the truth, I fell almost as deeply in love with Mrs. Kirke, (how could I help it? she talked so pleasantly and sung "The Mason's Daughter" so sweetly for me,) as I did with the captain's wife. You may know I was pretty far gone, for I *shaved* that night.

January 19. Cold, wind blowing, and still raining. I had told Kirke last evening that I desired to sell my horse, saddle, and bridle; that I gave sixty-eight dollars for them and would take sixty; that I had been trying to sell for a day or two, and felt pretty certain I would have to give them away or sell them for a trifle if I took them to the coast. He had two

lower-priced ponies he wished to sell in order to buy one to suit him. He was willing to trade these for mine, but did not have the money to buy.

To-day I said to him: "You want my horse. I cannot *swap*, because my object is to get rid of a horse. Now I am determined to sell him to you. I'd rather give him to you than to a horse-jockey. If you haven't the cash, I'll sell him to you on a credit." He was desperately opposed to the credit system, and refused to accept my offer; but finally told me he had a note on a man in Tennessee for \$85, several years old, bearing interest from date, which he would give me for Spot. After inquiring about the drawer till I was pretty well satisfied it would be paid, I agreed to take it. He found, however, upon examination, that the original amount was only \$65. I then told him: "As we are making 'a better for worse trade,' you must pay my tavern bill and stage fare to Lavaca, amount \$12.50, so that I would at least get that much *certain*."

Mrs. Kirke then said: "You need not be uneasy; I know my husband would never rest until he had paid the note, whether he endorses it or not, should the drawer fail to do so." You don't blame me now, do you, for loving her *just as much* as I did the captain's wife. I didn't take her right up and run off with her for three reasons: 1st. She had a fat, laughing baby, of six months old; 2d. The weather was inclement; 3d. Her husband said, "She is right; I couldn't take your property for nothing, no matter what our bargain was. I'll endorse the note; and if Lanier don't pay it, I will."

"Then, sir," said I, "I won't have the twelve dollars and

a half; I would have taken sixty from a horse-jockey, and don't intend to let you pay me ninety odd dollars." "Well," he asked, "what are you going to do with your saddle, bridle, and blanket?" "Why," said I, "they are yours: I included them in the trade." He wouldn't allow me to pay my bill, and I presented him with a copy of *Hiawatha*. The old lady tried to have an early dinner, but the stage came before noon, and, after affectionate adieus, I was alone in the coach, nursing sweet reflections. You see, I knew it wouldn't do to go home if I let any one beat me *at the game of gentleman*; and that Smith & Co. were the last people who would wish me to take advantage of an honest and confiding yeoman.

The country from Belton to Victoria is very similar to that previously travelled over—rich, undulating prairies, interspersed with poor, sandy, post-oak lands, and more rarely with small live-oak and cedar forests.

From Victoria to Powder Horn, extends a level, treeless, "hog wallow"—a classic name applied to the black, tarry prairies. The capitol, at Austin, is the only really fine building in the state. Austin itself is said to contain three thousand inhabitants. It does not appear to be larger than Somerville. There, after looking in vain for "The Eagle and Enquirer," in order to see what the chivalric and polished Pryor was saying of the things and the folks about Memphis, I found "The Bulletin." It was something like a letter from home. I enclose, for the purpose of preserving it, McMahon's editorial, headed "Christmas Day." Is there a more appropriately beautiful piece of prose writing in the English language? Its theology may or may not be orthodox; but it breathes the

spirit of enlarged philanthropy. In it Mc's big head and kind heart both speak. I read, or had it read aloud, at no less than three firesides in this lovely wilderness. All admired its originality and beauty. I told them how curiously and naturally profane the kind-hearted, headstrong, sincere old discourses were, but hinted at the command, "judge not, that ye be not judged;" and none suggested a doubt of his honesty.

The epistolary mode of journalizing is, to me, a pleasant task. It occupies my idle moments, and does not divert my thoughts from you and home. Tedious as its perusal may have been to you, and would have been to any one, but a dear friend, or an affectionate wife, the leisure afforded by this unexpected delay has led to the completion of this incomplete little history of my Texas tour.

Though "the norther" of twenty days is whistling without, and I am writing in a fireless room, with gloves and cloak and blanket on, and my fingers are slightly aching, I must add a closing paragraph in order to refer again to the politeness, the respect, the sociability, the kindness, the friendliness, the cordiality, and the unaffected, natural, easy, hearty hospitality which I have everywhere received—in the stage, on the road, in the village, and at the homestead—from all classes, in this wild country. I have been always, everywhere, accustomed to such good treatment, that I cannot exactly tell why I appreciate Texas hospitality so highly. Had I calculated on the reverse, it would be easily explained. But having grown up in West Tennessee, and passed with it through all its transitions, from the Indian and deer, or savage state, up to civilization and Christianity, I understood the social condition of



Texas almost as well at the commencement as I do at the end of my journey.

The people generally are deficient in energy and enterprise. Fashion does not require them to make a show. They live plainly and within themselves. Their property consists mainly of stock and land. Though owners of large herds of cattle, a majority do not have milk or butter on the table. Their wants are few, I assure you. Consequently they do not need much money, and have but little. It may have been the surface-motion of that independence of spirit, freedom from anxiety, absence from petty selfishness, and careless generosity, which the causes specified are so well calculated to engender, that distinguish this people from those who make a lifetime struggle for a genteel living in populous fashionable communities, and aroused peculiarly amiable emotions in my bosom.

At any rate I bid adieu to Texas with kind feelings, and the sincere prayer that "the Lone Star" of yore may ever shine brightly in the brilliant constellation to which she was attracted by the sweet influences of filial affection.

January 26.—Cassimir House, POWDER HORN, Texas.

The "Steamer" sits like a duck on the water. In a few hours the steam will be up, her sails unfurled, and I moving not home but *homewards*. Even this is cheering.

Yours and the little ones',

WILLIAM ATSON.



## LETTER XV.

The Gulf again.—New Orleans.—The Mississippi.—Natchez.—Vicksburg.  
Memphis.

MEMPHIS, October 21, 1856.

JONATHAN PUBLIC, Esq.,

DEAR SIR:—After a ride of a few hundred yards over the wind-stirred waters of the bay, the passengers bound for Galveston or New Orleans found themselves assembled on the moving steamer. Between the Island and the Crescent City I saw on the boat but one sight worthy of notice, and recollect but one incident worthy of recording.

The sight was an elegant-looking, whispering, jabbering, painted thing called “a FAST woman.” A few whiskered, greasy-haired, finely-dressed, perfumed Hyacinths were buzzing around and drinking in her honeyed words. The passengers watched and discussed the fair criminal. Was she guilty? I know not. But one thing I do know—it is, that no woman who has acquired the cognomen “Fast” will ever become a Cæsar’s or a gentleman’s wife.

The incident was as follows. Four gentlemen, who had been travelling not together, but at the same time, and under similar and equally advantageous circumstances, through Texas, met in the cabin, and “fell into a conversation” about

their tour. Two talked of the bright, and two of the dark hours only. Two had been treated better than they anticipated. Two had fared too badly for human endurance. Two required nothing but respect, and were grateful for small kindnesses. Two exacted more than they deserved, or would render to others; regarded small favours as their due, and exaggerated little inconveniences. Two were grumblers; and therefore miserable. Two were modest and grateful; and therefore loving and happy.

On the third evening, as the quiet stars began to spangle "the blue ethereal sky," the sea-sickening motions of the vessel ceased. She had walked into the smooth waters of the Mississippi. The next morning we awaked, "looked out," and saw, by the break of day, the level landscape where

"Encircled in his winding course the Crescent City lay."

This, with the exception of St. Louis, is the greatest of Southern cities, and, but for being the summer residence of the Yellow Fiend, that "walketh in darkness, and wasteth at noonday," would rival the metropolis of the North. Even as it is, all nations meet therein, and its more intelligent inhabitants seem to combine, in admirable proportions, the energetic shrewdness of the Yankee, and the chivalric generosity of the Southerner, with the polished suavity of the Frenchman. In the evening, seated on the deck of a moving hotel as it glided up the muddy current,

"'Twas fair to view the city spires as towering in their pride  
Their lengthening shades lay mirrored on the river's silver side;  
Where gallant barks were riding, and its bosom whitening o'er  
With snowy wings, which commerce wafts to many a distant shore."

'Twas no less fair as it puffed along to view "the coast," on either hand, with the stately mansions of the toiling, pleasure-seeking, Mammon-serving masters, the white cabins of the hard-working but happy slaves, the cleared fields around, the orange orchards in front, and the magnolia forests in the rear, both verdant, though waving in the bleak breezes of a cold January.

"Natchez under the Hill" I have seen by starlight. Natchez on the Hill and its environs, famous as the luxurious residence of an elegant aristocracy, and as the place where the eloquent Prentiss taught in poverty a private school, and afterwards wooed and won his bonny bride, it has been my misfortune always to pass at night.

Vicksburg, the largest town of Mississippi, is a well built city reposing on the side of a mighty hill. It presents a beautiful appearance to the passing spectator, but must be inconvenient to the bipeds and quadrupeds who daily "pull up" the acclivity, and "hold back" down the descent. Notwithstanding the momentary wrath excited by the thoughtless impoliteness of the five physic-givers, I cannot think the hearts of its inhabitants have grown cold in such a "sunny southern" clime. At least Mrs. Atson says they have not; and I know better than to contradict her.

The northern ice had floated below Natchez. The higher we ascended the more roughly the floating masses jarred, with their collision, the struggling steamer.

At the Bluff City the ice extended unbrokenly from shore to shore. The boat, however, forced her way to the wharf

but could not have advanced farther without great difficulty and danger.

Bidding adieu to many pleasant acquaintances, I ascended the Bluff, and found the chilled pedestrians shivering in the frigid atmosphere, and the city, which Sun and Frost-king usually touch so temperately, wrapped in a mantle of snow.

Thirty years ago, or thereabouts, a little boy, by command of a father, who endeavoured to guard against rearing a cowardly or lazy son, by making him, under colour of business, *practise* his energy and courage, was seated on a little black pony, and a big pair of saddle-bags, riding westwardly, *alone*, through the unfelled forests of West Tennessee, listening to the loving birds as they chirped and fluttered in the untrimmed shrubbery, watching the dark glossy green of the turkeys perched in the tree-tops, or flying from anticipated danger, startling by his shouts the active squirrel, the more timid hare, the graceful wild deer; and ever and anon meeting the moccasined Aborigines.

Thus journeyed on, in the days of Auld Lang Syne, the little rider on the little pony and the big saddle-bags, till, stared at by the idlers at the corners, he passed along the streets of a little village on "the Chickasaw Bluffs." That boy was ourself. That village is now the city of Memphis. Around it our interests, aspirations, and affections cluster, and of it we will let Doctor Wm. A. Booth speak.

In his address before "The Library Association," delivered in 1853, he says:—

"Again: the position of Memphis is peculiarly eligible. According to Lieut. Maury and Col. Garnett, it is such that



she will necessarily be the centre of the mighty network of railroads destined to ramify throughout the Union.

“Whether that be true or not, IT IS TRUE that Memphis is in the heart of the Mississippi Valley, occupies the highest point of uninterrupted navigation on this mighty river, and is below the mouths of his principal tributaries.

*“It is also true that Memphis can import and export directly, and therefore is not necessarily dependent on New Orleans.*

“It now costs us almost as much to get an article from the ship, after it has landed at Orleans, to the steamboat lying at the same wharf, as it does from New York to New Orleans.

“The amount thus paid on the merchandise that comes to and passes through Memphis, cannot, I suppose, be less than a half million of dollars.

“Let us look at the map, and view Memphis in her relations to the rivers of this continent, and the whole system of railroads, completed and projected. See how the numerous railroads of New England converge into the Erie road, and the Erie and other roads of New York, and the Pennsylvania, and Ohio, and Maryland, and Virginia, and Kentucky roads, how they all converge into the Bowling Green and Memphis road.

“Having arrived here, see how the divergence begins again. *There goes the Orleans road, the Mobile road, the Charleston road. There, just across the river, starts the steam-horse to the Pacific, waking, as he moves onward through the West, with his tramp and his neigh, the life and the power that has slept for six thousand years, in its fertile bosom and its stately forests. And there, last but not least, swollen by his upper*



tributaries, sometimes frozen, or too low above, but never at or below this point, the "Father of Waters" rolls onward through the Gulf, to mingle in friendship with the mightier Amazon—the great king of rivers."

These are merely some of the Doctor's positions unconnectedly given. For their demonstration, I refer the inquisitive capitalist to the Address. When it was delivered, but one railroad, "The Memphis and Charleston," had been begun, and our city only shipped about 180,000 bales of cotton. Now, contractors are at work on the road "just across the river;" and the cars are running on three railways this side. Though neither of these roads as yet reaches into any section of the country, of which Memphis is not necessarily the market, she shipped, last season, 300,000 bales. In the next two years she will invade new regions with her iron arms, and take possession of their produce.

Thus much I have thought proper, dear Jonathan, to say of the lower portion of the Mississippi Valley, for the instruction of the untravelled members of your family.

Partly to please those of them who love good poetry, and partly in commemoration of a deceased young friend of the sunny South, I will transcribe below a poem on that mighty stream, which courses through Columbia's heart,

"Like some great shining thought, Omnipotence  
Has wakened in its depths."

It has never been published in any book, and many may think it equal to "The Great River," by Tennessee's peerless poetess. Hoping you will excuse the nonchalance and care-

lessness with which I address so distinguished and potent a person as yourself, I remain,

Yours respectfully,

WILLIAM ATSON.

## THE MISSISSIPPI.

BY G. W. PIERCE.

A march, a solemn march and grand,  
For the monarch of the streams,  
As he glides along with his waters strong,  
In the light of the morning beams ;  
From the frozen North, he sallies forth,  
From his source in a silver spring;  
And marches away in proud array,  
Like some great conquering king.

The streams at the sound of his mustering drum,  
Their tribute currents join,  
And with all their force in a winding course,  
March onward to the line.  
Missouri comes from his mountain homes,  
And Ohio's thousand rills  
United gleam in a silver stream,  
And rush through the echoing hills.

Flow on, thou river deep and strong,  
In turbid grandeur flow ;  
For thus of old thy waters rolled,  
A thousand years ago !

When forests spread their mossy head,  
Where the Indian warrior stood,  
And his bosom swelled as his eye beheld  
Thy everlasting flood!

Along thy banks his nation roamed,  
And the winged arrow flew,  
And thy crimson flood was dyed in blood,  
And cleft with the light canoe;  
The bounding deer then gathered here,  
And the wolf's long howl was heard,  
And the white plumed crane stalked through the cane,  
With the swan and the forest bird.

Where are they now? Across the seas,  
A warlike nation came\*  
To people the woods of thy solitudes,  
With the bulwarks of its fame.  
And the deer and swan from thy wilds are gone,  
And thy tribes with their conquering foes  
Lie scattered around, and the shell-built mound  
Declare where their bones repose.

Roll on, thou god of rivers, roll,  
And thy diapason keep  
For the great, the brave, beneath thy wave  
In his unforgotten sleep.  
A floating bier for that pioneer †  
Who first to thy shores had come—  
Oh! let him rest on thy cradling breast,  
In the sound of thy muffled drum!

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\* Spanish.

† De Soto.

Could his form arise from thy bosom, now,  
What changes might it tell,  
Since on that land his toil-worn band  
Received his last farewell!  
Rich fields are seen, and meadows green,  
The stately mansion bright;  
Cities of pride begem thy side,  
And glad the passing sight.

The majestic steamboat puffs along,  
Like a thing of life and pride,  
With a mantling crest on thy broad, deep breast,  
And along thy billowy tide,  
By day and by night they wing their flight,  
And waft th' exhaustless stores  
That Commerce brings on her laden wings,  
To our homes from distant shores.

Go on, go on—mysterious stream—  
With thy deep, eternal tide!  
On either hand the mountains stand,  
Like giants by thy side;  
And at thy feet all nations meet,  
Where the Crescent City towers,  
And Commerce pours her golden stores,  
Her wealth—her fame—her powers.

But where is the eye that may foresee,  
Or where the prophetic soul  
That may speak the praise of thy future days,  
When a thousand years shall roll  
Along thy coast, where Freedom's host,  
With their star-gemmed flag unfurled,

In crowded ranks shall press thy banks,  
And rule the Western world !

A march, a solemn march and grand,  
For the father of the floods !  
Let him roll along in pride and song,  
From his ice-bound solitudes,  
In course sublime to the sunny clime,  
O'er the land of the great and free ;  
There let him rest in the azure breast  
Of the deep, unfathomed sea.

END OF PART FIRST.





## PART II.

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NASHVILLE. GEORGIA. ALABAMA.  
MISSISSIPPI AGAIN.



## LETTER XVI.

DEAR JONATHAN:—Though approaching spring had turned the snow on the land, and the ice in the rivers, into water, the cool twilight of winter still lingered, when I took passage on the “City of Huntsville.” She ascended the Mississippi; washed the mud from her keel in the clearer waters of the Ohio; and then diverged into the classic Cumberland, up and down which I used to travel to and from college.

At “The City of Rocks” I wrote to Mrs. Atson, telling her how easily “The Huntsville” had paddled up the now swollen “creek;” how she was crowded with passengers; how I talked with the men and the women; how an old Methodist lady, who was rather “on the fast line” on land, was very demure and saint-like when above deep water and a boiler—“caze she was skeered;” how a conscientious Presbyterian lady was troubled in the spirit because she was travelling on Sunday; and could not be convinced that the prayers and sermons of the four preachers on board were works of supererogation sufficient to balance the account against them for publicly violating their own precepts, and the sanctity of this holy day; and how, in the midst of the bustle of the crowded boat, and the familiar scenes and faces of the capital, the yearning for the home I

had left filled my heart, and the images of home-folks haunted my imagination.

The letter, containing all this and more, was miscarried; and may long since have been read and ridiculed by those clerks of yours, who don't attend to "the dead letter office." Its miscarriage occasions in these whispers a slight hiatus; the loss sustained by which you will please charge to the post-office department.

Respectfully,

WILLIAM ATSON.



## LETTER XVII.

Murfreesborough City Hotel.—"Fanny Fern."—Mrs. Lee Hentz.—"Sequel to Linda."—A sly way of doing good.

MURFREESBOROUGH, February 27, 1856.

DEAR MOLLY:—I mailed a letter to you day before yesterday, wrote a note to you yesterday, and left a despatch to be transmitted by the wires to-day. I am now at "The City Hotel," seated in a neat, well furnished private room, the counterpanes and pillow-cases white as the untrodden snow, the furniture new and shining, a brisk fire of fresh, nice-looking hickory wood, burning cheerfully in the fireplace, and throwing its radiance through the room, over a hearth well painted with Spanish brown. I do not know whether the landlord is married or not; but I would bet a mint that there is a woman *about*. Servants, table, food—all have the same neat look.

I have finished the business of the day, and written a long



letter to Smith & Co. My candle is lit—"Harper" for March lies temptingly before me—and yet I am writing to you.

Don't give me a bit of credit—I can't help it. You are not near enough to talk to. I am too far away for the three children to climb into my lap, crush my collar, soil my shirt bosom, put their feet on my pants, feed on me with their loving eyes, and electrify me with their sweet caresses. So, you see, as writing to you is the only substitute for these *luxuries*, I *must* resort to it. The old bachelors would call them *torments*. But I pity the middle-aged man who *loves* not the society of his wife, and the caresses of his children.

With these preliminaries, I will go back to "The City of Huntsville." On the 22d, I found, lying in my berth, "Rose Clark," by "Fanny Fern." It was my room-mate's—I don't know his name. As he was reading another book, I began this, and finished it in a few hours. Notwithstanding the piquancy of the style, and my admiration of them, you recollect I used to contend, from certain forms of expression *rather gross* for a woman, that a man must be the author of the articles over her signature. That a human female composed them, I have been compelled, by the proof, to acknowledge. But I still deny that a genuine, true-hearted woman, wrote them; and I shall adhere to this denial so long as Fanny claims the authorship of "Rose Clark." There is an *animality* about it which would be called coarse in a male author. It should be stripped of its bluish binding, "kivered with yaller," and have INDECENT printed on its title page. "The moral is good," some will say. So is the apparent moral of almost every vulgar novel. That is an *extremely*

*sensible* moral philosophy, and a *VERY lovable* philanthropy, which paints pictures, and creates images of lust and covetousness in the heart, and then coolly says, "Don't steal; don't commit adultery."

I confess, if a man had written this book, I should not have felt so indignant. But the slightest impropriety on the part of a woman, makes me blush for the whole sex. And when she comes forward as a teacher, a benefactor of mankind—as a woman *par excellence*, a light, an example to her sex; and then exhibits in act, by word or letter, innate coarseness—a too intimate acquaintance with the beastliness of depraved natures—the blush changes to a feeling of intense indignation; and I am ready to choke the first old bachelor who endorses the libel she has thus uttered.

Ah, "Fanny," you are "too smart;" and yet have not discretion enough to conceal your extra smartness.

The next day I perceived "The Sequel to Linda." I should not have read it, but I thought of your persistence in packing it up against my request, and concluded you must have some peculiar object in wishing me to read it. For this reason I did so, and was delighted with it. "Rose Clark," I have been forced to admit, much as I disliked even that admission, was written by *a female biped*. "The Sequel" was written by *a lady*.

Were the pencil-marks yours? Why did you specially desire me to read it? I could not answer this question more satisfactorily at the end than at the beginning. Sometimes I flattered myself that you might have thought I resembled somewhat the quick-tempered, but generous, forgiving, and

frank Bellenden. It could not be possible that you likened me unto the noble and quiet Captain Lee. Perhaps you thought I resembled the fiery-souled Robert, and wished to lead me to piety and the ministry.

How is this? I strive to be pious. My soul runs out after truth and God. I think I derive great happiness from my gratitude for His blessings, and my faith in His goodness. I think I do nothing wrong *deliberately*, and I try to look into my heart and scrutinize my acts. I aim to make amends for every discovered error, whether intended or unintentional; whether committed by word or deed, to white or black. I believe I treat you worse than I do anybody else, and you are not only willing to forgive me (are you not?), but think I am *extra clever* in addition, do you not. Well, you did not create me, and are, consequently, not under the same obligations to be forgiving and kind to me as my creator. And you are not better, are you, than the good God? This being the case, is it foolish or presumptuous in me, admitting what I say to be true, that I am honestly trying to do as nearly right as I can, with the lights before me, to believe that this good God will ultimately show me, if blundering, the error of my way, and lead me out of the wrong into the right track.

I think I have said before I would join some branch of the church, if for no other reason, on account of the children, could I do so honestly.

So far as the ministry is concerned, if there was no other world but this, I would join it "right off." I can conceive of nothing that would suit my tastes and talents better, if my

faith and my conscience allowed me to enter upon its solemn duties. In it there is a delightful admixture of solitude and society, of the practical, the moral, the metaphysical, and the poetic. Just think of it. Six days to study, visit, converse, *reflect*. The seventh day to have a crowd, a listening, intelligent, respectful multitude to tell those reflections to. Why, it would be equal to the luxury of writing to one's wife when home is far away.

Do not regret now that you packed up the book for a special reason. The mere suspicion that you did so was a pleasure to me. It caused me to read it with more attention and interest, and to think about it more afterwards. I generally admire boldness, but this delicate, this sly way of trying to do me good, pleased me much. I was going to say *tickled* me, but that is too light a word, and would not exactly convey the truth. I wrote you to direct your first letter, if mailed next Saturday, to Dalton, Georgia; the next, a week after, to Montgomery, Alabama; the third to Mobile.

Kiss Alice, and tell her to kiss Anna and Nellie for me.

Your husband,

WILLIAM ATSON.



## LETTER XVIII.

A talk with a D. D.—The infernal machine.—A father, and a Creator.—  
The difference.—Is my theology wrong?—"Mammy."

KNOXVILLE, "Coleman House," March 2, 1856.

DEAR MOLLY:—In my last I was commenting upon the difference between Mrs. "Fanny Fern," and Mrs. Lee Hentz, judged by their writings. To-day I read an announcement of the death of the latter. I regret that the hand of so pure a writer has been palsied by the grim-looking monster. A few months ago, she and our friend Mrs. G. were corresponding. By this time, perhaps, their congenial spirits have become personally acquainted in the spirit-land.

This must be a terrible world to those capable of love and friendship, who regard affliction not as paternal chastisement, but as God's vengeance; and Death as the enemy of man. In this connection I may state the substance of a conversation, on "The City of Huntsville," between myself and a learned minister of the gospel.

I told the doctor some of my heresies, not for the purpose of arguing, but to see if I could not learn something from him that would do me good. I sat at his feet, as the young Paul sat at the feet of Gamaliel, to be taught. After stating my case I listened, and with hope; for he proved to be a man of



thought, and presented new arguments in a new way. Finally, however, he fell into the old song, about the sovereignty of God; and the mechanism of his principles, which must move and roll, and roll and move eternally—crushing up everything and every being that is, intentionally or unintentionally, in its way; whether that being has eyes to see, or active limbs to move him from its orbit, or is blind, and lame, and halt. Whenever a man believes or teaches that the good God creates sensitive beings, and then works this infernal machine in the darkness where they reside, he has lost his influence with me. When I reflect, too, upon the coolness and self-conceit with which such an one calculates upon his escape and my ruin, I have to call to my aid that charity which “hopeth all things,” before I can conclude that he is not a miniature of the selfish and cruel Creator he professes to love and worship. When the Rev. Dr. reached the objectionable point I forgot my pupilage, and announced my creed so forcibly, that I really believe it scared him.

“I have children,” said I; “I did not create them. I was merely an instrument used in their creation. Could I be induced to punish them, except for their own good? Would I be so mean, as coolly and deliberately to invent, and put into operation machinery, that they might *not* see, or seeing *dimly* might not be able to move out of its way, which machinery in case of failure, either of the endowment of sight, or of the ability to evade it, would crush up and torture, not simply their physical but their moral natures, not for time only but throughout eternity? You readily assent to the doctrines indicated by these questions. You acknowledge my obligation to my child-

ren, based simply upon my *instrumentality* in their creation. Is not He who created under *infinite* and unescapable obligation to take care of his creatures, to punish them only for their good; to endow them with the power, and to show them clearly and unmistakably the way to escape; and to make them *realize* the importance of escaping, before permitting them to be crushed into eternal misery by the action either of infernal or supernal principles? Say no more to me, sir, on this subject. I can never worship *your* God. He is not as good as I am. The God I worship is better. He is supremely wise and good. He is my Father; I am his child. He is bound 'to stand up to,' to take care of, to endorse for me so long as I *try* to do right."

After pouring out a flood of divinity, such as the above, I and the Rev. Dr. parted. We parted kindly, but it seemed to me that his face was pale.

This happened on Sunday afternoon. In the morning I had heard Mr. Folsom, a half-breed Indian and Vice President of the Choctaw nation, preach. His text was: "Of a truth, I perceive that God is no respecter of persons. But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted of Him."

At night, the Rev. Mr. Rozell gave us Wesley's definition of sin, which I imbibed from the teachings of my pious father. It is as follows: "Sin is the voluntary transgression of a known law." Prove this definition to be incorrect, and man is upon a dark river, drifting seawards; but whether towards the sea of error, or of truth, he *cannot know*. For, no matter upon what stream he may be floating, he will hear upon the

banks thousands as intelligent and honest as himself, shouting that *this* river empties into the Dead Sea, and that another, just over yonder, rolls into the haven of eternal life.

Admit it to be true, and every practical moral problem is solved. Superstition and priestcraft recoil as though stabbed in the heart; and man shakes off their tyranny, and stands disenthralled and freed from everything but his individual responsibility to God, his neighbour, and himself. In this condition he can only become unhappy by doing wilful and deliberate wrong. A man cannot be miserable, *it is a moral impossibility*, who in addition to the foregoing faith believes that God is good, and that he himself is honestly and earnestly struggling to do his duty, and voluntarily transgresses no known law. Is there anything opposed to Christianity in these views of mine? Would they make man worse, if universally adopted and acted upon? Would they not dry the tears of many a timid, self-accusing, humble mourner? Would they not soften the stony heart of many a self-conceited, uncharitable Pharisee, that thinks he is the favourite child of *our* Father, who intends by the power of some principle in the machinery adapted to the purpose, to lift him out of harm's way, and let the rest of us go to the devil? I love the meek, and lowly, and self-sacrificing Jesus for turning over the tables of the money-changers in the temple. I love him for denouncing hypocrites, as "whited sepulchres, full of rottenness and dead men's bones." I love him for the mighty prayer he has taught us to pray. I love him for teaching us that the sum and substance of the Ten Commandments, is "to love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and thy neighbour as thyself."

My heart swells with the increase of love as I hear him say: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest."

But the doctrine I maintain is confirmed; and this love attains almost the climax of adoration, when dying upon the cross he casts a parting, pitying look upon his crucifiers, and exclaims: "Father! forgive them, *they know not* what they do."

I love the firm, and the feeling. I love the denouncer of rascally Power, and the supporter of the feeble and the ignorant. Tell me, thou woman of instinct, of intuition, is there anything very wrong in all this? You know I have no instinct, no intuition—that I have to plod my weary way by reason's feeble ray. A word of yours has convinced me that I was a fool many a time. Have you any little word with which to undermine my fabric of theology? If so, speak it out; I wish to be right. The love of the children would expel all foolish pride. My nerves never tremble for myself. But the fear of leading Alice, our first-born, who has been growing into our hearts for nearly ten years; the sweet, pretty, affectionate Anna; and *that electrical beauty*, the little Miss Nellie, into moral error, makes me decidedly timid about openly dissenting from any orthodox opinion. You, however, teach them (do you not?) that their Heavenly is better than their earthly father; that they can trust the former implicitly and for ever, so long as they try to do right; that the latter can, the other cannot be deceived; that one has only the will, whilst the other possesses both the will and the power to serve them. If so, we cannot differ materially. "Enough!" "enough!" of divi-



nity, methinks I hear you say, although it is Sabbath evening, "Let's take a walk."

Oh! that I was there to accept the invitation; to talk, and be talked to by home-folks. We'd walk in the orchard, and look for the buds that prophesy of fruit. We'd look at the horses and the cattle, and say a passing word to the negroes. We'd walk to the graves of the patient, afflicted Maria, and "Mammy," the good old octogenarian, who held my mother in her arms when a babe, and nursed her children, sister Mary's, and mine. Her amiable countenance is mixed up with every period of my life—it is graven on my heart; it formed a part of that sweet company that travelled with me through the prairies of Texas. I shall always see it. Pa and Ma were the only persons I recollect ever to have heard call her Dilsy. Every one else, old and young, called her "Mammy." Who that did not know her when too young to be so called, could help it? So amiable, so polite, so humble, so meek, and so venerable-looking, who could resist loving and respecting her as a mother, black though she was? So affectionate, so kind to children, and yet so particular and modest and firm with them, she was the queen of nurses.

Nellie, the last of three generations she held in her arms, cannot recollect her. Will Anna remember her old, familiar face? Certainly, Alice will not forget it?

I have written enough for one sitting; and will close this Sunday epistle by "how-d'ye" to the servants, and a kiss to the little ones and my "better-half."

Yours affectionately,

WILLIAM ATSON.



After a trip at the rate of about five miles an hour, we arrived at Nashville after midnight, Sunday the 24th.

Monday morning I walked up to the City Hotel to breakfast. Here I met with our representatives, Holmes and Bartlett; also Dortch, of Fayette, and General Sneed, the Attorney-General of the state—four honourable men, although they do hold office, and work for the public.

Was I not tempted to repine Tuesday morning, when shaking the hands of acquaintances who had left Memphis on "The Cline" the third day after my departure? I flatter myself you would have grumbled considerably. Talking about flattering myself, reminds me of "The Wife's Valentine," by Mrs. French, which I enclose. Marrying, or maternity, seems to have made a woman of her. Is it not sweetly beautiful? I think so; and I had the vanity also to think there was a lady, not at Forest Home, but at Bothwell, who was entertaining similar feelings, and following with similar thoughts and prayers her wandering husband.

You can't imagine how it would please me to know

"The thousand fears  
That chill your secret soul;

and to see

"The tears  
That mock your weak control."

French must be perfectly delighted. But I am afraid you women are too vain. Listen!

"Ah, yes! I know where'er thou art,  
Thou'rt thinking still of me."

Again :

“ For whereso’er  
Thy weary footsteps roam,  
Thou’lt find no love thy life to cheer  
Like *hers*, who waits at home.”

Is this faith, or vanity? You will all say, faith, as a matter of course; and so would Mrs. John Smith. Well, you will admit (won’t you?) that Smith is as trustworthy as either French or myself. Now, what do you suppose occurred? I’ll tell you, and I want you to tell Mrs. Smith and give me as authority. I stumbled upon her beloved the other day in Chattanooga, and found that he was travelling about with a—— lady.

*To be serious*, I will remark that you and Mrs. S. ought to love us mightily, and thank your stars for catching such paragons. Just suppose we had not seen your forlorn condition, and concluded to marry you, you might be still groaning in old maidenhood.

*To be solemn*, I will say, if the sighs, the tears, and the love are not all poetry, and your trust is based not on vanity, but on faith as I know it is, whenever my absence makes the bosom heave, the tears start, and the love grow apprehensive, try to think

“ Of holy things  
Of that pure, promised Heaven,  
Where God shall give us angels’ wings,  
Where all our sins forgiven,  
And free from stains of earthly dust,  
In that eternal dome  
Both thou, and *they*, and I, I trust  
Shall find a heavenly home.”

The foregoing letter has been written several days, but I wouldn't mail it—it was too soon. I couldn't, however, keep from writing to you; so I added this postscript. Do not be disappointed should you not get another letter for some ten or fifteen days after the reception of this, as my writing will depend on whether I stop sufficiently long at any one place. The fewer letters you receive, the sooner you may expect me home. Do not, however, look for me till I instruct you to do so. Kiss the children for me.

Yours affectionately,

WILLIAM ATSON.

I close this March 5th, at Dalton, Geo., where I hoped to receive a letter from you, but did not.



## LETTER XIX.

Remedy for home-sickness.—The Author's helm.—His way of being happy.

—A favourite pastor—who drinks.

ATLANTA, March 6.

DEAR MOLLY:—Here I am; and who do you suppose is my room-mate for the night? No other than your old Jackson pastor, the Rev. Samuel Quentin. He is the same mild, amiable, affectionate man. The object of his trip is, to raise money for a benevolent enterprise. He expects to travel through Virginia, and as far north as New York. I should think he would be a poor hand at such a business.

His questions about Alice seemed to come out of his soul. This, as a matter of course, touched her father's heart. His ward married Jenkins. Is not that a singular denouement? She knew, as her guardian doubtless told her, of J.'s secret weakness, of which he himself was the discoverer.

Abner Jenkins, he informs me, is also married; and doing well in St. Louis, where they all reside.

But why am I writing, having just mailed a letter yesterday?

It is a pure act of selfishness. I tried to write to my good friend, true friend, old friend, the Hon. R. T.; but had that singular feeling about the heart, which nothing relieves but scribbling to you. So I gave up the job of writing to the Congressman, and resorted to my remedy.

As I feel better now, and am expecting Mr. Quentin, I will stop its use for the present—only saying, I have as yet received no letter from you and am waiting here solely for that purpose, having ordered letters for me to be forwarded from Dalton to this place.

Will yours come to-morrow? Will it bring good or bad news? Hope for the best, and be prepared for the worst, is the helm with which I steer my little bark.

March 7. Having finished a letter to T., and Quentin being gone, I turn again to my elixir. I am grateful that I do not have to stimulate my flagging energies by artificial stimuli. When business or society fatigues, books cease to charm, and leisure or solitude depresses—I want no tobacco, I want no brandy. All I have to do is, to turn my thoughts into the deep sabbath of my soul, and there, whatever vision

may unfold itself, I am certain *in the midst* to see wife, children, my country, and God.

As I told Quentin last night, I am uncontrollably happy. The slight depressions of which I occasionally speak are nothing but the quiet of the sea after a storm of enjoyment; this quiet not being disagreeable in itself, and giving an increased zest to the luxury of the tempest that will soon begin again. It seems to me, too, that I hold, as a mere delegate doubtless, in my own power the winds that give motion to this inner sea.

Poor Quentin! I am sorry I spent the night with him, although we sat up till nearly 2 o'clock, talking of ourselves and of the olden times; and the conversation was very pleasant. He is undoubtedly a good-meaning man; but is an Irishman not only by birth, but in his animal propensities. You know what an eater he is, and that he was always candid in admitting he loved strong drink, although he then refrained from resorting to it. During our sojourn together, a cigar was scarcely out of his mouth; and between 8 o'clock and going to bed, he took three drinks of brandy. I did not see the size of but one of these, and that was a tumbler more than one-third full. The bottle containing this he took from his trunk; said a lady presented it to him; that he only drank in this way when travelling; that he was aware it was injurious to his health, and having finished this would get no more. Now he could not have been talking to a more charitable, or, as some would say, a more credulous man. I believe in his sincerity, and in the goodness of his intentions. I believe he thinks himself a Christian. His destitution of concealment



or hypocrisy, his confessions of error, the confidences he reposed in me, all strengthened these convictions, and increased my affection for him by weaving in with it a feeling of pity.

A minister of the gospel, in good health, with a bottle of brandy in his trunk! a Christian dependent on tobacco and alcohol for happiness! "a soldier of the cross" requiring artificial stimulants to enable him to fight the battle of life! This minister resorting to these things in the presence of a friend, whom he was desirous of leading out of the mists of a docile and unobtrusive skepticism into the light and joy, beauty and power of his own faith! Was it not enough to excite one's pity?

It is true, also, that he could not have exhibited his weakness to one upon whom it would have less effect. I know that neither a leader nor his principles should be judged by the conduct of his unfaithful, weak, or cowardly followers. If we cannot be satisfied to judge them by their own merits, we must not look beyond *the true* disciples.

My father was one of these. Though Paul and John, Luther and Calvin, Hannah More and Wesley be present, he too would occupy a front rank in the company of the consistently pious. In the light of his example I was reared. But for that light I would long since have been involved in the mazes of a believed, a confirmed infidelity. Having not only read, but seen the doctrines of Christ *practically* illustrated by one with whom I lived for years, and whose words and acts I watched with all the prying curiosity of boyhood, and have since weighed in the balances of a maturer judg-

ment, the doings of "Tom, Dick, or Harry" have little or no effect upon me.

My fondness for Quentin—the wreck I see ahead—my inability to prevent it—his knowledge of my habits and views—his own good sense—his consciousness of his weakness, and the danger that threatens him—his inability to resist the temptation to walk upon the crater's edge, knowing the volcanic elements to be mixing, and moving, and heaving beneath—cause me to tremble for his safety, and to regret the discovery of his weakness. Let us hope that this man, so intelligent, so amiable, so useful at the age of forty-five, may die before he degenerates into a mere eating, smoking, drinking animal.

Wouldn't I make a "*splendid*" historian, if I wrote history as I do a journal for my wife? How long would it take me to get through *the history of the world*, if every fact plunged me into a train of almost interminable reflections? In my next I'll try to go back, and start at Nashville. That's the place "I left off" at, was it not?

Kiss the children, and have the corn and potatoes worked for  
Your affectionate husband,

WILLIAM ATSON.

## LETTER XX.

College anecdotes.—Mrs. P. and Mrs. R.—The reason people treat the author kindly.—A practical illustration.—Nashville.—Clodknockers at home in the State House.—A ride between Nashville and Chattanooga.—Look Out Mountain.

FORSYTH, Geo., March 9.

DEAR MOLLY:—According to promise, I return to Nashville. There I spent two days. I was so constantly employed I didn't have time to think much of the days of yore. I didn't even visit the old college grounds, where I "rubbed my back against a college wall," and whence I went, just before graduating, to fight my country's battles on the plains of Alabama and on the banks of the Withlacoochee.

Old Doctor Lindsley, when years afterwards I attended, with the beloved Mrs. Washington, a party at his house, laughed at my original mode of parting with him, and rehearsed the solemnity with which, after purchasing horse, saddle, and bridle, I rode to the same mansion, and told him, "I didn't like even the appearance of running or sneaking from anybody or anything, and had merely called to tell him I was leaving for the war."

"Old Phil," as the boys called him, and myself, had met in battle array before. Joe Johnson and I had been school-

mates when we used to recite *Amo, amavi, amatum, amare*, to Doctor Rogers, a learned Irish pedagogue. When I arrived at college, young, and a stranger, so far from home for the first time, he offered me a part of his room. I accepted; but soon found that our habits were totally diverse.

Joe was the boy who said he sat up all night *playing cards*, in order that he might be ready for prayers in the morning. These he did attend much more regularly than myself, though it was simply for the purpose of deceiving the faculty, by having no marks for absence from these devotions. So soon as I discovered his habits, I told him he could gamble and drink as much as he chose; but that he would have to do these things by himself, if he did them in *our* room, for I would allow no one else to join him in perpetrating them there. As he never "*got drunk*," this relieved me of all annoyance, but once.

It so happened that several of the boys, some of whom were "a little jolly," collected one evening in our room, and were laughing and talking rather boisterously, when Abednego Stephens, the professor of languages, on his 9 o'clock tour through the college, tapped at our door. At this hour every boy should have been in his own room. To keep from being seen, some "*student*," unknown to Joe or myself, hearing the approaching footsteps of the professor, had locked the door, and slipped the key in his pocket. I tried to open it, but could not, and explained the reason to Stephens. He was irritated, suspected something wrong, and commenced kicking the door. Finding access not so easy in this way, he returned to his room to get his key, thinking it might fit this lock. He



had shattered the door, so that while he was absent a panel was slipped out, and the erring ones fled.

The next morning the key was found on the stair steps. Joe, whose love for prayers had not entirely deceived the faculty, was suspended; and I was commanded to have the door mended. I sought the Doctor, told him the patching of the door would not cost more than fifty cents, and my leaving college then would amount to a loss of probably two hundred dollars; but that I would leave before I would have the door repaired. "Ah, but," said he, with his sternest air, "you cannot leave thus: you shall be expelled." "Expel, then," said I, and turned away. The old fellow called me back, and said: "You can go to your studies; I'll pay for the fixing of the door myself." Thus it ended; though I had everything packed ready for starting before seeing him.

Have I not been fortunate? At Jackson I boarded with Mrs. Polk. She had two sons. Tom was the oldest. Ed and myself were about the same age. If she had only two cakes, or two apples, I must have one, *certain*; and Tom must go without. This was the principle upon which she acted.

At Nashville I boarded with Mrs. Ramsey. She had a number of college boys boarding with her. I was the youngest, and was called her "pet."

This disposition to love and befriend the weak and the young, *of itself, without any additional fact*, proves these women to have been possessed of good hearts.

You may be surprised at my dwelling upon *such little kindnesses*. You may be tempted to say, these ladies only did their duty to a child away from home, and under their protec-



tion. *Yes ; but who does his duty ?* And then, out of those who do, *who does it affectionately ?* Again : I never stint the joy of gratitude by cold reasoning ; at least until some demands are made upon it.

It always did, and does to this day, "strike me" as something new and astonishing, although I have never been accustomed to anything else, when I find any one peculiarly polite, peculiarly friendly to, peculiarly fond of me. I never did calculate or presume upon anything of the kind.

Only a few weeks ago I wrote to a friend of many years, requesting him to endorse for me. I did so with as much hesitancy and timidity as though he had been an acquaintance of yesterday. He replied, when I saw him, by saying he and another endorsed for each other, and were under some obligation to endorse for no one else ; but that he would endorse for me if he knew he would have the notes to pay.

The more power Smith gives me, the more cautious I am in using it. As I wrote him, I despise a man who takes an ell because he is given an inch. And those who think a friend is bound to oblige them *twice*, because he has done so *once*, are equally as contemptible, and sure to add ingratitude to their silliness.

Thinking thus, never asking, or at least insisting on third parties doing anything for me, which I do not believe, *after making due allowance for self-deception based on partiality for self*, I would do for them were our circumstances reversed ; and being as cautious about wounding the feelings of white or black, unless duty or wrath excite me, as I am about their wounding my own very sensitive nature, combined with my

faith in man; and, as a result of this faith, the fact that I always put the person I am attempting to influence, fairly and frankly into the possession of all the information calculated to make him realize my position, and his duty, are some of the main reasons for my being able to say, with but little exaggeration, as I sometimes do say, jocosely, "He will do it for me—no one ever refuses what I ask."

A circumstance, illustrative of this, occurred at Knoxville. I had procured all the facts, preparatory to a settlement of my business there, except one. This could not be speedily obtained, without putting to some trouble an old gentleman, not interested in taking this trouble. I was bent on closing the matter, and leaving that day; and said, "I will get him to do it." The gentlemen with whom I was conversing laughed at the idea of anybody's hurrying him. I judged, from what they hinted, that he was a cold-blooded, selfish man, who could not be moved by any appeal, save one to his pocket. This did not deter me. I hunted him up, introduced myself, told him what I wanted him to do, and why I wanted him to do it, *immediately*.

The result gave strength to my faith in the indisposition of almost every human being deliberately to commit, without strong temptation, an act which they cannot deceive themselves into believing is not ungentlemanly or unkind. Had I been told I would meet a generous-hearted Chesterfield, instead of a cold-blooded Shylock, I should have had no reason to question the correctness of the statement, so readily did he comply with my requests.

But to return to Nashville. I could not, as I walked out

to McEwen's and saw the Presbyterian church where I used to go occasionally with Mrs. Ramsey, the house in the rear of the church where she and I used to reside, the Episcopal church to which I sometimes went, the Campbellite church in which I heard the oratory of Alexander Campbell in the day of his power, and the Methodist church which I attended regularly, "help thinking" how happy I was twenty years ago. Neither could I "help feeling" grateful that I was just as happy, and a little happier now.

Nashville, I have frequently told you, was one of the most beautiful cities in the Union. I have sometimes, coming up to it from the West, and seeing its rocky hills covered with the evergreen cedar, and the verdure and foliage of spring, thought it the most beautiful. But it did not thus enchant me on my last visit. I was either mistaken in the number of evergreens, or the unusual cold has blasted them. At any rate, scarcely a green thing was visible.

The Capitol is a plain-looking, plainly furnished, capacious, and elegant marble building, situated on Campbell's Hill. It overlooks the entire city, and *has* cost the state \$1,100,000. I am very much inclined to think a private person could have such a building erected for one-half this amount.

General Sneed says, there were some rough countrymen examining its outside, and cautiously peeping in at the doors. He asked them to walk in and make themselves at home, adding, "It belongs to you, gentlemen." "*How is that?*" said one of them. Sneed replied, "You pay taxes, do you not?" "Yaas," was the response. "Well," continued the general, "this house is built out of those taxes." "*Wa'all*

raily," said they, "we never thought of dat afore;" and stuffing their hands deep into their pockets, they strutted in large as life, and *made themselves at home*.

From Nashville I travelled to Murfreesboro', spent a night there, and then started for Chattanooga. The country between these towns is quite picturesque; being hilly at first, and becoming mountainous as you approach the latter. It would, however, scarcely have elicited the admiration of my travelled eye, as it has not yet recovered from the touch of the Frost-King, had it not been for thoughts of you, of your fondness for the beauties of Nature; and my regret at my inability to feast you, for a time, on the shifting scenes through which I have to pass, and the varying scenery at which I am forced to look. As you cannot take a real ride, come, and take an imaginary one with me. I am at Murfreesboro'. It is 9 o'clock, A. M. The passengers rush into the cars, and take their seats. The iron horse utters his shrill neigh, and dashes away like Mazeppa's scared steed.

We are now passing through high embankments. Nothing is visible but red clay and jagged rocks. Don't say, "Look out!" for goodness sake, or that Irishman's head will become jelly. Now we are rushing, like lightning, along the brink of a precipice. The car careens—a little more one-sidedness, and we are in eternity!

Now, we are rushing along the banks of a rolling river; and now we are gliding over a bridge. If one timber "gives way," the silvery waves that flow beneath will be your husband's winding-sheet.

Now, we are whirling with the mighty speed of our fiery



charger over a narrow path that skirts a "rock-ribbed" hill; and now we are plunging through the rayless bosom of a rock-hearted mountain.

Now, again, we are winding along the outer circle of a small and peaceful valley, embosomed amid the hills, and over-arched by the blue sky. Now, we are riding over the pearly and pebbly rivulet that meanders through it. The tramp of our horse, and the rattle of our train, make so much noise we cannot hear its gentle murmur, the only music of the vale.

And now, we are careering along the banks of the beautiful Tennessee, its clear, deep waters below; and above, our mightiest mountain rears heavenward its giant form.

*And now*, we are in Chattanooga, at "The Crutchfield House;" and *presently* we'll be eating supper.

You think you would be alarmed by such a ride, do you not? Well, you are mistaken. The cars were full of cowards, and no one was scared. It is scary only at a distance.

"The Look-Out Mountain" seems to stand within "a stone's throw" of "The Crutchfield House." The morning after my arrival, supposing it to be about three-quarters of a mile to the top, I thought of walking up, and was in the act of starting, when a friend told me it was two miles to the base, and three *via* the road from base to summit; and offered to loan me his coal-black steed. I accepted the offer, and finally, after missing the way several times and travelling round and round for ten long miles, reached my destination.

Oh! talk not to me of Leman's Lake, of fair Italy's vales, of Alps and Apennines pinnacled with glaciers, while Niagara thunders in the North, the green prairies of Texas smile in



the far South-west, and the Look-Out lifts its granite apex in the midst of our glorious Union.

Let us teach our children to make Meccas of the scenery of their native land. Kiss them for me. I hope you will live long enough to make pure thoughts and holy aspirations a part of their existence.

Tell the servants "howdy;" and say to them I hope you can truthfully tell me, they have tried to do their best. I will esteem them so highly for obeying you in my absence.

Yours, affectionately,

WILLIAM ATSON.



## LETTER XXI.

Apex of Look-Out.—A hugging and kissing couple.—Three days in Knoxville.—Happiness in tribulation.—Rome.—Macaulay.—The Kennesaw.—Atlanta.—Two little secrets.—The Author confesses his sins—Not to a priest, but to a priestess.—An interesting conversation interrupts the confession.

TALBOTTON, Ga., March 16.

DEAR MOLLY :—When I closed my last I was sitting upon a coal-black steed, on the granite apex of "Look-Out," five tiers of mountains around, and deep vales, a flowing river, and gurgling streams beneath me—the world visible to my imagination, and in the midst my country appearing the fairest of its "ten thousand" kingdoms and "altogether lovely."

I descended, physically, but the vision forsook me not as

the cars that afternoon rattled off towards Dalton. My attention was diverted for a time from the beauties of Nature, by the indiscretions of humanity. A hugging and kissing couple were along. I began my comments as a matter of course. This always puts the devil in me. A gentleman, who happened to be seated by me, said they were acquaintances of his, and had just been married the evening before. "So much the worse then," said I. "In an old couple it would be merely ridiculous. But that woman is uttering a libel upon herself and her sex. The remarks you and this other gentleman have just made, prove this to be the fact; and also that you know nothing about the passionless purity of a pure woman. This is the very reason I am so severe on such conduct. A woman ought to shrink instinctively and with horror from exciting such feelings and such comments. Her acts should chill unchaste emotions, and her very presence make vulgarity blush. The purity of woman, and her ignorance of the world, sometimes lead her into apparent impropriety. But it is man's duty to guard this purity, to protect this ignorance from blunders. He is acting badly who takes advantage of them to expose the being he *professes* to love. There is no excuse for *that* fellow. The girl may not know, but *he knows*, if not what we are saying, what we are thinking."

You will say, these remarks were uncalled-for and imprudent. *I cannot tell* the observations that called them forth; and as for prudence, I don't profess to have any when woman and George Washington are the subject of conversation.

Leaving Chattanooga late in the afternoon, we have but

two hours of daylight in going from there to Dalton and from Dalton to Knoxville, as we reach the latter at 3 o'clock, A. M.

Knoxville is quite a pretty place, located on hills at whose base flows the placid Tennessee. I spent three days there. One of these days was the Sabbath. Having met with an old literary and medical schoolmate, who is a Presbyterian, I attended that church with him. The Rev. Dr. McMullen is the pastor—a meek, melancholy-looking man, who for twenty-five years has been trying to persuade the people of Knoxville to walk in the straight and narrow track. His text was: “We glory in tribulation also.” His sermon was appropriate, and expressed my views exactly; but the solemn countenance of the speaker and the melancholy cadence of his voice suggested the idea, that, though the theory of happiness in tribulation might be good, the practice of the theory was the very devil. There was no joyousness about the preacher. I wanted to get up and tell the congregation, that I had learned *not* from the sacred desk, or by studying in a closet, but out in the hubbub of the world and in the midst of personal trial, that the Apostle Paul was a man of practical sense, and that any reflecting, *teachable* man would find, whether the question was viewed *morally* or *commercially*—that it would lead him into misery, to repine and fret, and grow bitter about trouble; and that there was good cause to glory in tribulation, not sought, but unavoidable, for tribulation, properly received and considered, does undoubtedly “work patience, and patience experience, and experience hope.”

When I telegraphed you to direct your first letter to Dalton,

I expected to visit Green county before returning. Still, as it was possible a letter might have arrived there, I allowed myself to indulge in a dim expectation of receiving one, but was disappointed, and directed it to be forwarded to Atlanta.

From Dalton I went to Rome. The engine ran off the track just before I got on. This occasioned a few hours' delay. Rome is not located on seven hills, nor on the banks of the Tiber, as is commonly reported. It is a beautiful village reposing on the gentle slope of one high hill, which lays between the Etowa and Ostanaula,\* where the mingling of their waters forms the Coosa river. The dome of St. Peter's was not visible as I rode in, but the lofty steeples of two neat little contiguous churches were. They reminded me of many a pastor, and layman, who, with their eyes apparently fixed on Heaven alone, are trying to *overreach* their neighbours in more ways than one.

The next day I journeyed to Atlanta, and there, as I wrote you, waited a day for a letter. Two mails arrived during my stay—the last should certainly have brought one. The post-master said it had not. No one dislikes to ask such questions more than myself, but I asked him to look again. He did so, and reiterated the fatal negative. I walked calmly back to my room, and shut the door; I didn't kill myself; I didn't take a drink; *I merely resorted to Macaulay.*

It required an effort to resist the depressing influence of this disappointment; but the effort, aided by Macaulay, and a long walk, as the shades of evening approached, was success-

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\* Ostanaula, pronounced Oostanaula.

ful. Pleasant thoughts of home, gilded by hope, returned, and "Richard was himself again."

I have now been absent nearly a month, and know not what that month has brought forth. Is everything going on smoothly? Are you all well? Perhaps some of you are sick. Perhaps some of you are dead. This absence, this inability to tell you where to write, except at long intervals, are my trials. They are the tug of war, the hard part of the battle. I sometimes, for a moment, think I cannot "stand it;" that duty certainly cannot require me to be thus away. But when the cowardly fit begins to come over me, I think of "battle, and murder, and sudden death," of the sufferers at the siege of Londonderry, of the bloody foot-prints of the old soldiers, *away from home*, at Valley Forge, of poor women with children, *sewing* for a living in crowded cities, and then grow grateful and happy at the comparative *littleness* of my *big* trials.

I occasionally meet a man with wife and children, and human feelings too, who has not been home in three or probably six months. Perhaps he loves his family as well as I love mine. Shall I refuse a sacrifice, which he seems willingly to make?

Thus work and reading, thought and observation, abate the intensity of the yearning for home, rendering it, not a disagreeable, but pleasant sensation, just acute enough to keep you and the little ones always before me, to stimulate my energies, and quicken my speed homewards to the greatest rate compatible with duty.

In three or four days I shall be in Columbus. There I cer-



tainly shall feast upon one of your epistles. If again disappointed, it may take "something stronger" than Macaulay to do me.

By-the-bye, speaking of Macaulay, reminds me of his England, the last volumes of which I shall bring you. Technically speaking, this book is not a history. It is a long, splendid, moral, social, philosophical, theological, historical essay, replete with common sense reflections, and radiant with the vigour and beauty of an affluent and chastened fancy. It is undoubtedly written by the old editor of The Edinburgh Review, with his powers of prolongation wonderfully augmented by age, or just now exhibited to their full extent, because he has taken *instead of a month*, fourteen years to complete "*The Article*." The inimitable peculiarity of this writer is, that *prolongation* does not lessen the *condensation* of his style.

I forgot, after describing Rome, to mention my trip in the cars around two-thirds of the Kennesaw. This beautiful mountain stands, without companions, *alone* in the midst of lilliputian hills. Measured from base to summit its height would not probably appear so great as that of "Look-Out." The high table-land on which it reposes so grandly is, however, said to be higher than the apex of the latter; in short, to be the highest point, except the mountain it sustains, between the Atlantic and the Mississippi. A little farther back, where the road crosses the Coosa, a lovely landscape of hill and dale dances for a moment before the traveller's eye. Blast the beauty of this landscape, and blow up the Kenne-

saw; and Georgia, so far as my explorations have gone, would not possess a spot to which the term picturesque would apply.

Saturday, March 8. At 5 o'clock, A. M., left Atlanta, a pretty city, created by the crossings of railways, and containing six or seven thousand inhabitants. Its founders are remarkable for having had the good sense to leave a few forest trees standing here and there within it. Took breakfast at Griffin, fifty miles distant; saw and settled my business with three men there, hired a buggy and horse, trotted out to Zebulon, twelve miles; saw and settled my business with three firms there, trotted back, took the cars at half-past 5 o'clock, P. M., and travelled to Forsyth, about forty miles. Laid over at Forsyth till Sunday night, attended church in the morning, and spent the balance of the day reading the Testament and writing to you. By travelling two hours Sunday night saved thirty-six hours.

Slept in Macon, from 9 o'clock till 2 o'clock, A. M.; took breakfast in Americus, eighty miles distant. I mention my day's work, from Atlanta to Forsyth, as a sample of the way I press forward. I never loiter a moment. I immediately hunt up my men, urge them to quit everything else, and attend to me, so that I may leave. This appeal is always successful; and thus it is that I have travelled as much in four months as a loiterer would in twelve.

My Mississippi and Texas trips could each have been easily doubled as to the length of time. Smith, too, would have been better satisfied. He does not, I think, understand how I can get along so fast, and attend well to his business. Although I have never yet left a place, where a month's sojourn would

have more completely settled it. This hurry also saves him the amount of extra expenses for delays per day, which would vary from two to four dollars. I feel a delicacy in explaining my progress thus to him, just as I would in telling him of my riding on horseback, when there is no particular cause for fast driving, instead of in a buggy, because it saves him \$1.50 per day.

This last is a secret he, I presume, will never know. Another is, that about noon, after leaving Americus, appetite reminded me of dinner, and a house of entertainment was not far distant. The days were not sufficiently hot, or sufficiently long, to require feeding a horse during rides of forty miles. The horse, however, was as much in the habit of dining as myself. Missing a meal would injure me no more than him. I had tried it in Texas. So I resisted the temptation to selfishness, and passed on.

I am almost ashamed even to tell you these little struggles of conscientiousness, although *we are one*, and I am professedly writing a diary of my journey, and my heart.

"I thought you were opposed to having any secrets of your own," you will probably reply. As a matter of course I meant *bad* secrets, those that weigh upon the conscience, those of which not *the telling* but the publicity would stain the character.

Good secrets, however *small*, do the heart good. An injudicious babbler or braggadocio, is disagreeable, if not despicable.

You may be disposed to inquire whether I inform you of all my bad acts? Really I am treated so well, I have nothing

to arouse my besetting sin—irritability; and travel too fast for temptation to assail me. All the annoyances I have experienced, occurred the morning I arrived at Americus.

At Macon I got in the cars, and according to the custom in the night trains, when not crowded, took two seats, lying down in one and resting my feet in the other. Just as I “got fixed” for a snooze a red-haired fellow—confound red-haired fellows!—desired me quite unceremoniously to let him have one of the seats. I rose up, looked around, saw a number unoccupied, and simply remarked in that peculiarly calm and soft tone, which I cannot help using when ready for war to the death, and which Wilkins says, he understands so well, that it would, though scarcely above a whisper, wake him if he were fast asleep, “I expect to retain both these seats till the cars become crowded.” The fellow evidently disliked to yield, but did so.

I lay down as I spoke, and would soon have been in the arms of Morpheus had not a political conversation commenced between two gentlemen behind me. Both were intelligent. One was gray-haired, possessing a silvery voice and great fluency. The other talked well also. The last was a fire-eating Locofoco, though not a very voracious one. The first was a Conservative of the Clay and Fillmore school.

What kept me awake was not so much the interest or novelty of the conversation, as the wonder excited by the exact concordance of this venerable stranger’s views with mine, not simply in their outlines, but in all their details. This might have flattered my vanity, had not the immense disparity in our conversational capacity depressed the puffiness of the little fool.



I wish I had known in boyhood the power of, and the advantages derivable from the proper exercise of this gift. We all have some talent that way, and a talent can always be improved.

If desirable in men, conversational ability is peculiarly charming in woman. You are "*some*" with the tongue; and, what is saying a great deal for one of your sex, you are a judicious talker—your talk never degenerating into mere garrulity, unless I am sitting by very much interested in reading; or, involved in the throes of labour, being about, if not interrupted, to bring forth an idea.

Alice, with her flow of words, her capacity to reason, and her vigorous imagination, should, if properly trained, attain great conversational power. Nature has done its part. All we have to do is to fill her heart with holy aspirations, her head with useful information; to teach her, through the medium of composition, how to use the best and simplest words to express an idea, to trim as she grows older the wings of her fancy, to impress on her the importance of so modulating her voice as to be heard *distinctly only* by those she is addressing, and the absurdity of talking merely to be talking, or to show how smart she is, as well as the folly of cant, or twang, or formality in, or giggling, or laughing, unless there be something to laugh at, during conversation.

But I have forgotten that I started to report my annoyances and sins. Well, I had no sooner reached Americus than a gentleman, looking at me firmly in the eyes, said something I didn't exactly relish. He however "dropped his eyes" so soon as he finished his sentence, and continued writing. I



stood looking at him for a moment and walked off. Had he looked at me a second longer, one of us would have missed breakfast, I presume. I eat, and "knocked around awhile" attending to business. But you know it is against my nature to keep anything disagreeable on my stomach. So I walked back, and said, "Look here, Mister, do you know that you made me as mad as the devil this morning?" He asked, "How?" I told him. He replied that he had been irritated by other parties; that I came up while the irritable mood was on him; that he was sorry he had wounded my feelings, and would then, and there, make all the reparation in his power—an ample apology. We were not simply acquaintances after that, we were friends. I had use for him, and he willingly allowed me to use him. You know after this he could have led me like a little child.

In Albany, a lawyer I had never seen, who thought I had interfered with his business, called me aside in the most excited manner to demand an explanation. Attacking people was an old thing, but to be attacked was such a novel occurrence it really diverted me. I talked to the gentleman so quietly, and eyed him so firmly and quizzically, that "he smelt a rat," apologized for his excitement, and requested me to say nothing about the matter. Somebody doubtless had quizzed him.

Lovely priestess, I believe, with the exception of omitting to report that I occasionally say "the devil and all his angels," I have confessed to you all my sinful acts. Kiss the children.

Yours affectionately,

WILLIAM ATSON.

## LETTER XXII.

White-footed horses.—Georgia.—Georgia compared with Texas and Florida.—The people in the Piney Country.—The unpardonable sin.—Classification of the human family based on butter.—High water.—Thoughts in the wilderness.—Music.—Poetry.—Chattahoochie, Indian names.—The author thinks of becoming an editor.—Criticism of his wife's letter.

HAMILTON, Ga., March 17.

DEAR MOLLY:—Having come here on horseback, and left my carpet-bag in Talbotton, I find myself without Macaulay, or even the sheets of paper upon which I commenced writing you a long letter yesterday. With nothing to entertain me but the landlord's tongue and the mournful pattering of the rain, I begin another. I believe I had gotten to Americus, and was about starting on a horseback tour.

I am doomed, it seems, to have white-footed or white-legged horses. The first horse I practised medicine on was a present from an aged relative, and had four white legs. The Mexican I rode through Texas had several, and the one on which I took the trip now to be spoken of had four.

There is an old song, I can't think of the words, but the substance is that a horse with the latter quantity should be killed. The propriety of this rule has not been demonstrated by my experience. All these horses performed finely. The

last was a splendid traveller. He paced well, and was a perfect master of the "fox-trot," as the favourite gait of equestrians is classically styled. I rode him about one hundred and fifty miles in four days, and transacted business with a variety of persons. The tour was all the way through a piney country, as hilly as our section, and its soil looking as a sand bank would if *a little* manure or rich dark dirt was sprinkled over and mixed with it. This is, I think, a pretty good description of Georgia thus far. It is rather diverting to see how the people deceive themselves. You rarely meet with any one who thinks he lives in the pine woods. These are a little ahead or a little behind. "There is oak where I live," says each one. I mentioned this peculiarity in the hack, as I journeyed to Talbotton Saturday night. A gentleman replied: "Well, it is true you have been in piney, but you are out of it now. The timber here is oak, and the country is rich." I thought, even as he was talking, I could distinguish by the starlight my evergreen acquaintances, but concluded to wait for daylight before yielding to the conviction of his hallucination. The morning showed that the darkness had not deceived me. I have travelled to-day twenty-five miles through this fertile country. There are some oaks, and occasionally a medium-sized chestnut tree, but it is still pines and oaks, not oaks and pines. It is true also that the soil is not so sandy, but it is more clayey. Fifteen bushels of corn and less than half a bale of cotton per acre would be about the average amount of production.

Give Texas as many railroads as Georgia, and who could estimate her prospective wealth? In ten years every section

of the size of this state would contain three times the population and six times the wealth. It is just as healthy, the climate is as agreeable, the scenery more beautiful, and the soil vastly more fertile and durable.

But let's go back to the *pondy, piney* country, which lies between Americus and Cuthbert, via Albany. It resembles Florida, in being interspersed with large, deep ponds. The latter, however, has the advantage. Its ponds do not dry up, and its *pineyness* is relieved by rich and finely-timbered hammocks. The cars are approaching, but the whistle of the engine has not yet awaked the people of this section. They lack enterprise—they are lazy. The men hunt and smoke and poke about. The women dip. The darkies loiter. From my short sojourn among them, I am inclined to believe they are kind-hearted and clever, like the vast majority of our species, but that they do not generally have *butter*.

Now, although I myself individually can eat fried meat, and “sop” a biscuit in gravy without grunting, and, by means of a charity that hopeth all things, forgive these folks for living amid the pines and the ponds, for being lazy, and even, that staggers me, for *dipping*, I regard their not having *butter* as *the seventy-eighth* sin for which forgiveness is not commanded. Were I a teacher, lecturing on geography, I should say :

“Boys: the human family may be divided into three classes. The savage, the semi-savage, and the civilized. The savage make slaves of their women, and don't have butter. The semi-savage treat their women as equals, but don't churn. The civilized combine the two great goods, butter and the equality of woman.



“While on this subject, I will farther remark, that in East Tennessee, and throughout Georgia, at this season the only *vegetable* used is *eggs*. For fear you should ever have to travel through these remote nations, I would advise you, my dear fellows, to practise eating them while you are young. I suffered no inconvenience from the custom above mentioned, because I learned to eat ‘um’ ‘biled hard’ when a boy like yourselves.”

I was badly prepared for rain, and it began to drop soon after I started. Vast quantities fell during the first three-fourths of my tour. It was so arranged, however, that I suffered scarcely any inconvenience therefrom. It drizzled occasionally during the day, and poured constantly at night. The creeks rose to such a height as to render the propriety of attempting to ford them, very doubtful. As the horse felt his way through Bear Creek and Blennerhassett, I began to fear he would find “the bottom out,” so high did the water reach. But it did not reach quite high enough for drowning purposes, and we landed safely. One heavy shower during the day, and I would have been drenched from head to heels. A few hours more of rain, and I might have been detained by the high-water or drowned. Am I not a fortunate traveller? And should I not be a grateful one? Well, what do you think? I had so little to do as I journeyed, not forty, but four days, through the wilderness, that I listened for “the miserere of the pines.” For two days I listened in vain for the plaintive chant, unless it was the death-thunder of one old giant, that fell slowly as I passed, crash after crash beneath the woodman’s axe. The third day the wind began to play upon



its green-topped instruments. It would take L. Virginia to detect, blindfolded, the difference between "the miserere of the pines" and the miserere of the oaks. It is, I presume, the same tune that the same harper plays in the forest about your dwelling. You have felt, many a time and oft, its wailing notes, especially during a dull, cloudy day, falling on the heart like those of a deep-toned organ, when, at the twilight hour, it pours its melancholy music along "the dim cathedral aisles."

Talking such stuff reminds me of J.'s having called me a prose-poet. That word "prose" was a saving clause.

If I am a real poet,  
I am quite old not to know it.

It is true, they are about my only efforts; but this and the following impromptu parody, conceived on a hot, calm day, away down in Louisiana, as I rode old Stanley along the banks of the Bayou, scorched by the mingling of the rays of the two suns, that stood like globes of fire—the one in the sky above, the other in the sky below the water—are certainly among my best productions.

No breath of air doth break the wave  
That rolls between La Goula's banks,  
Stanley from death by heat to save,  
Or fan and cool his rider's shanks.

Few have the poetic head. Many possess the poetic heart. However deficient in the former, I should dislike to admit myself destitute of the latter. The poetic is like the musical

sense—a necessary component of every sound soul. You know, I can neither whistle nor sing, nor play a tune on any instrument; that I have not the ability to learn to do these things; and that I cannot even tell when a tune is properly “turned.” Yet who more easily swayed by sweet sounds? The fiddle shakes my foot. The flute soothes and softens; the drum and fife make all that is martial stir within me. Out of the vast crowds that heard Jenny Lind at the St. Charles and Odd Fellows’ Hall, I was probably the only one utterly devoid of a musical ear. But was any one present more completely enwrapt, transfixed, intoxicated by the passing melody? The man who has no poetry in his soul is just as fit “for treasons, stratagems, and spoils,” as he who has no music there. They are sister senses. And he who possesses them not is as morally maimed, as he is physically who has not the senses of sight and hearing. I claim, therefore, to possess them. Who does not? Without them, how dreary, how icy, would the cold reality be? Who could live under the prospect of the monotony of three meals a day for twenty or more years, did not fancy picture the table radiant with the vision of human countenances, and vocal with the music of human voices? Without it, would there be any *prospect* at all? How could I drag existence through twelve long hours alone in the pine woods without its aid? How could I hear the angel-warblings of the distant song queen? How could I hear the terse logic of the once stuttering Demosthenes, or the more artful oratory of the polished Cicero? How could I hear the thunder of our own great Webster, the silvery tones of our greater Clay, and the sublime rhapsodies of that hero of pa-

triotism and eloquence, the slandered Kossuth? How could I see, even now, Alice's dreamy countenance, Anna's sweet face, Nellie's sparkling beauty, and the wife, around whose maternal knees they cluster? *How could I see God*, were it not for the creative, "the shaping power" of imagination?

Pitiable indeed is the man, if such a one there be, who has not keys in his soul that respond musically to the touch of this mighty magician!

March 20. I am now on the steamboat Cusseta, walking the waters of the Chattahoochie. These Indian names, and the views above expressed, remind me of the impulse that caused me to call him who desired to change the name of Etowa to High Tower, an unromantic scoundrel. This whisper of the heart, you perceive, was logical. I would as soon throw down the Colossus, and blow up the Pyramids, as blot out these Indian names. They are almost the only memorials to remind us, not only of the Indian past, but of our country's past. They are obelisks pointing to the period when the forest was unfelled, and the red man was its king; hunting the game, shooting arrows at his foes, and dancing the war-dance beneath its overarching branches; when the Indian mothers sung lullabies to their babes, and Indian maidens listened to tales of love on the banks of these winding streams; when the timid partridge whistled fearlessly in the hazlenut bush, and the more timid fawn sported courageously on the green sward. They are statues, pointing with one hand to the rudeness and imbecility of a by-gone barbarism, and with the other to the polish and power of a present civilization.

Well, what think you? I have written the preceding para-

graph without telling you that I reached Columbus last night about ten o'clock, got up this morning, went to the post office before it was opened, had the good luck to meet the postmaster at the back door, just as he was about to lock himself in—explained my case, persuaded him to look for the long-expected letter, and waited till he told me *it was not there*.

Knowing that you have done your duty, I have no comments to make. Yesterday, four weeks ago, I bid you and the little ones adieu. In less than that time, letter or no letter, I hope to tell you "howd'ye." I dislike this absence from home so much, I have been canvassing the question, whether I would accept a proposition to edit "The Sentinel." When the home feeling is strong within me, I think I would. But when I reflect on my want of preparation, the disagreeableness of being eternally before the public, whether blamed or praised—the moral responsibility of an editor—and my inherent incapacity to be a one-sided party man—I conclude to reject it. Then, again, the thought strikes me that, may be, I have talents, as my friends seem to think so, and my occasional and spasmodic efforts have been attended with great success; and the questions arise:—If I have, am I not burying them in my present business? Might I not do some good if I had daily an audience of five thousand people?

Then, again, I remember, that almost everybody's friends think they are smart, and that many a third and fourth-rate little fellow of my acquaintance has been praised by his friends and the public, until he thought he was "some pumpkins;" or, to use an expression not quite so classical, was Atlas carry-



ing the world upon his shoulders. Thus I revolve in an eddy, making no progress to a conclusion.

I have, on this subject, but one fixed principle, and that is, to consult, to the best of my judgment, the interest of yourself and the brats, without any reference to my own feelings, or Borrioboola Gha. The only being described in the Good Book as worse than an infidel, is "he who provides not for his own household."

I omitted to mention that I rode from Hamilton to King's Gap, the name given to a post office at the base of "Pine Mountain," I suppose, from its being contiguous to a gorge that divides the two peaks of the mountain. Here I should doubtless have had another vision of the grand and the beautiful, but for the mist and the fog, and will now modify a remark previously made, by saying, that the traveller does occasionally catch views of the pine hills, which may be styled picturesque. After supper, on the evening of the 21st, no boat being at the landing, I left Eufaula in the stage, reaching a railroad station about 4 o'clock, A. M.; and, after lying in the cars two hours and a half, started for Columbus, where we took breakfast. I again inquired for a letter, and was again disappointed.

At 11 o'clock last night left Georgia. This state possesses one good quality—perseverance. The ruling passion was strong in death. It was sandy and piney to the last.

23d, Montgomery, Ala., Sunday. Arrived at breakfast time, took a bath, put on clean clothes, and asked the way to the Episcopal Church, where I heard Bishop Cobb preach.

Before, however, either bathing or going to church I stepped



around to the post-office. The postmaster handed me two letters from Smith. I told him those were not the ones I wanted, that he must find me some others. He took another look and could find none. I walked away; but it struck me yours might have arrived some time ago and been advertised. I discovered that this was the case, and received your second letter forwarded here from Mobile. I have only read it three times, *as yet*. So you see I am well prepared to criticise it. 1st. It is too short. 2d. What it tells about you is too bad. If you will disobey my orders, and make yourself sick, it is certainly the height of impudence to write me about it; the idea of your getting up at 5 o'clock in the morning, and then, I'll bet, you miss taking your nap in the afternoon half the time. 3d. You don't say enough about the children, &c., &c. But I'll *read it again*, and see if I cannot find more faults in it. If I could only have gotten the previous one, all these objections, except the folly of your making yourself sick, would doubtless have been removed.

I have just returned from church again, and given your letter a fourth perusal. It is very sweet, and though too short to satisfy me, is sufficiently long considering how unwell you were. It is now about 10 o'clock. You and the little ones are in dream-land, I presume. How I wish I could steal in and gaze on your calmly reposing countenances! Having not been in bed for two nights, I must now seek the embrace of "the sweet restorer."

Montgomery, 27. This afternoon I start to Mobile. A week hence I expect to write from that city, and can then tell

you whether I shall return home, or go to South Carolina first. Kisses for all.

Yours

WILLIAM ATSON.



### LETTER XXIII.

The way to cheer a sickly or gloomy wife.

MOBILE, March 29, 1856.

DEAR MOLLY:—I arrived here yesterday afternoon, hired a cab, and rode out to Cousin Robert's, *to get letters from you*. Never having seen the ladies before, I had to be introduced and sit awhile. As soon as I reached the street I opened the letters, and commenced their perusal without reference to dates. It so happened that I read the gloomy one last, and by the time I finished it was growing dark.

The wail of your despairing spirit was heard by, and its gloomy tones were echoing and re-echoing through mine,—I was thinking of what might have happened, of what I ought to do, of what I could do, whether it would be of any use to telegraph, to quit business and hurry home—in short I was bewildered, confused, gloomy, and was going to my room to brood in solitude over your sickness, and my absence from your side, when an old familiar face appeared before me, and a friendly hand with more than ordinary cordiality pressed mine. The face and the hand were those of Singleton.

The appearance and the pressure were exceedingly opportune. They acted upon me like a cheerful message from home.

Singleton didn't simply ask after you all; he made you the subjects of conversation. He told anecdotes of Alice, when she used to sit at the table in her high arm-chair. He spoke with feeling of Willie's early death, and commented on his noble countenance. He asked if you were the most beautiful woman about Memphis, as you undoubtedly were on La Goula, &c., &c. Under the influence of such talk I couldn't feel gloomy. Hope sprung up and whispered that you had recovered. I passed to my room, and on examining the dates of your letters more particularly, found that the more hopeful ones were written last; that you were decidedly convalescent. And as the promised despatch had not arrived, though ten or twelve days had elapsed, it was reasonable to suppose you had completely recovered.

As Singleton is not in the habit of being complimentary, it is strange he should have fallen into this train of conversation just at this juncture. I told him you regarded my thinking you beautiful as very ridiculous, and thought I stood alone in my opinion. He expressed surprise at this information, and said your beauty was an admitted and undisputed fact in your old neighbourhood.

Now I did not know that he or the people there thought so, nor does the fact raise you in my estimation. It does, however, give me rather a higher idea of them. I did not know their taste was so refined.

By-the-bye, it struck me as very singular, while reading the outpourings of your affection for my honourable self, that a refined, delicate woman should love a man. Why, I had as soon love a rhinoceros.

In nothing, however, has Providence displayed its wisdom more than in this. Woman wants a protector, and consequently entwines her affections about the man she supposes to be strong and brave, though he may be ugly and uncouth. Hence, too, the reason women rarely fancy pretty men, because prettiness and effeminacy generally unite in the same person.

On the other hand, man—the rhinoceros—wants something to protect. Hence men, *that are men*, love delicate effeminate women. Knowing this as you do, it is strange you should have intimated, in *the gloomy epistle*, that your death would be a small loss to me, on account of your feebleness and ill-health. Your liver must have been terribly out of order: otherwise you could not have been so gloomy or forgetful. You well know that these are the only things that have saved you; that I could not live with a fat and healthy, or masculine woman; that if you had been either I should have gotten a divorce, or killed you off long ago. You would hesitate now to become fat and healthy, for fear I'd quit loving you, quit nursing you, quit carrying you in my arms; for fear I'd say: "Weed your own row, you are too much of a man for me." And yet you will annoy yourself, especially when your liver gets out of order, with the idea that you are not sufficiently useful. As though the earnest and painful efforts of the sickly to do all they can, however feeble, were not more touching, more worthy of love and admiration, than those of the robust and the restless, however successful.

April 1st, 10 o'clock at night, and I have to make an early start in the morning, for Wahalak.

I intended to write you a long letter to tell you of the beauty of Montgomery, to describe Mobile, to dwell on the pleasure the company of Singleton has afforded me, to tell of my visits to Cousin Robert's, and how delighted I am with his family. The old gentleman has, however, worried me so about his hobby—that hobby which has reduced his lovely family to poverty, that I had not time to fulfil my intention. The probability, I *fear*, is that I will have time to write again. Don't begin to look for me before the 20th. If I go by Canton and Jackson I will hardly arrive that soon. I telegraphed you to-day to telegraph, and write me at Columbus, Miss. I can but feel assured from your silence that you are well, but to be told this is really so, will make the assurance doubly sure. Kiss the children for me. It is useless to send messages to them through a mother, who talks to them so much about their father, that even a fifteen months' baby, who doesn't like strangers, will quit that mother, and stay with nobody else but that father, after he has been absent nearly three months. You know this was the case with Nellie on my last visit home. You may depend upon it I have not and never will forget it. I regard it as an exceedingly touching evidence of your unostentatious love. How insignificant, in my estimation, the huzzahs of the mightiest multitudes, compared with the sweet incense that ascends from the hearts of yourself and those three little girls.

Remember me to the servants.

Yours affectionately,

WILLIAM ATSON.



## LETTER XXIV.

The author meets with kin-folks, at Wahalak, and his match at joking.—Describes a Mobile family.—The old man and his hobby.—The author in love again.—Montgomery, Ala.—Half-cities.—Lanier.

April 5, 1856.

DEAR MOLLY:—The wanderer is at Wahalak, and with the Maynards again. Cousin Robert refused to “take out” a letter for me at Mobile, because he could not believe it possible that I had a correspondent at this little out-of-the-way village. A fact more improbable was discovered last night, as we sat chatting before the fire. This kind family are “kin” to me. Mr. Maynard’s given name is James L. He is a near relation of the once beautiful Cousin Pattie L.—the girl (*perhaps* you have heard me speak of her) with the blue eyes, the fair complexion, and the auburn ringlets. You are, also, *probably* aware (now don’t become jealous) that I spent, in the days when I was young, an entire week at her father’s rich valley plantation over which the mountain, topped by a certain seminary, casts its shadow in the morning; that during this delightful week I sat almost constantly by her side, called her “*Cousin*” in my softest accents, read the whole of Lalla Rookh aloud, and talked in the same dulcet tones to her hour after hour through the long days, and far into the

dewy nights. Well, Maynard, being "kin" to the lovely Pattie, is "kin" to me, and I am not at all ashamed of the relationship. I am much pleased with the whole family. He has two grown daughters, and they are good-looking. But for this, you know, I might have been tempted to have declined the cousinship.

It seems, however, impossible for a woman to be related to me without being more than ordinarily handsome. I made some such observation at the breakfast table this morning, and Maynard remarked, "If your female relatives have been in the habit of getting their beauty from you, they will have to stop now, for they certainly *have got it all.*" We all laughed at the *absurdity* of the remark. At least I must put this construction on it, in order to save my cousin's taste from your just indignation.

It is still April the 5th, but the wanderer is not at Wahalak. He is eighteen miles distant, sitting in a hotel in Macon, writing by candle-light. The preceding page was written in a pause of business, the other parties being in consultation.

As relations were my subject, I will resume it by telling you something of Cousin Robert's family. His wife is nearly sixty, looks younger than this, and is plain and sensible, having those quiet and modest manners which are so charming and yet so rare in old ladies. Mrs. Britton, or Cousin Lizzy, as I shall hereafter call her, has two sweet daughters, one about nine, the other eleven years of age. The oldest is handsome and gifted. Both seem to have been well managed.

Cousin Lizzy is quite a beauty. She is twenty-eight, but does not appear to be more than eighteen. Her taste in dress

is unexceptionable ; and her manners are perfect, blending ease, modesty, and grace in precisely the right proportions. The old gentleman was so insulting to me in our conversations about his hobby, that I finally said to him, "If you were a young man, I could not permit you to talk to me thus." To my great astonishment, this made him furious. He jumped up, shook his finger at me, said his age should make no difference ; that he had a son in Montgomery who would settle the matter with me ; that he himself was an Atson as well as myself, and would not "take an insult." I replied, "Who has insulted you ? I am certain I have not. Am I sunk so low in the scale of humanity that I cannot tell an old man, who has been insulting me for two days, that I could not permit a young man thus to insult me ? I would not insult you if you were to spit in my face." He said, "Yes, sir, you would tear me into atoms." I told him if I should so far forget myself, I would afterwards hire some one to kick me out of town.

All this occurred because, when everybody else forsook him, I aided him to the best of my ability, but was not willing, before being satisfied of the feasibility of his plans, to give up all other business and pitch blindfold into the vortex of his whims and caprices.

He gradually cooled off, and declared he had never designed to insult me. We parted friendly. I was, however, afraid his family might think I was harsh with him, and determined to explain myself to them.

These tête-à-têtes made us thoroughly acquainted. Cousin Lizzy being so pretty and so sensible, I appointed her my confidential agent. Now it follows, as a necessary consequence,

that a man who has a heart will fall in love with his confidential agent, if that agent be a beautiful, accomplished, and sweet-voiced woman. And so it was with me. I really couldn't help loving her *some*. But you won't object to this. *You know it's no harm to love your cousin.*

I took Singleton out and introduced him to the family. He returned enthusiastic in his admiration of old and young. The fact is, considered in all its branches, it is a remarkable family. Connected with it is a little boy who is a genius. A pictorial letter—pictures being used for words wherever it could be done—composed and drawn in admirable style by an absent sister, was exhibited for our inspection. On the table was a picture painted by Cousin Lizzy; and Mr. Singleton, who is a connoisseur in everything relating to literature and art, declared on our return to the Battle-house that it could not be surpassed in the United States. The most singular thing is, that none of them have ever taken drawing or painting lessons, and do not seem to be aware that they are peculiarly gifted.

What caused me to love Cousin Lizzy, was not alone her beauty, her manners, or her genius. It was the frankness, the common sense, and the filial respect and affection she displayed when we talked of her father. The old gentleman is doubtless a monomaniac; otherwise he could never have deliberately taken so interesting a family inch by inch down to poverty. He is undoubtedly kind-hearted, and even now believes he is working solely for their interest, though he is begging their hard-earned dollars to waste upon his favourite project. Not only so, he thinks he is supporting them, though really an unmitigated tax upon them. All, however, treat him with

“Little Dorritt” delicacy. I saw, although their judgments approved my determination, it would distress Cousin Lizzy and her mother for me to refuse to gratify the old man’s whim, simply because it would distress him, and I yielded once more. It is the last time. He knows but little more about men and business than a ten year old child.

You can form a very good idea of the appearance of Mobile from its resemblance to New Orleans. Their locations are very similar. The main difference between them relates to extent. There are, however, but few points from which this could be noticed.

Montgomery is one of the most beautiful towns I have visited. It is built upon a plane of high table-land on the banks of the Alabama, with an amphitheatre of hills around it. The capitol of the state and other fine edifices overlook it from the summit of these hills. Viewed from across the river, it presents quite an enchanting picture. The whole is visible—valley, hills, houses, the green pines, and the gently flowing stream. The environs are also quite pretty. The plantations are perfectly level—the cleared portions being sometimes adorned with vine fences, whilst in the back ground stands the dense forest, rendered beauteous by the intermingling of the verdant pine tops with the red leaves of the beech and the faded foliage of the oak.

I have, however, but little respect for these *half-cities*. Their inhabitants occupy a disagreeable “*betweenity*,” possessing neither the leisure and good-natured politeness of the villager, nor the charming polish of the city gentleman. I sometimes feel provoked at their *puffiness*, but soon reflecting



that this is a disease produced by their peculiar position, that they are human beings doubtless with human hearts, but are afflicted with the dropsy, I wipe a tear from my cheek, and think no more of them, unless it be to smile at the ridiculousness of the mock dignity this affliction imparts to their appearance, manners, and conversation. Nothing herein stated must, however, be supposed to refer to Lanier, the landlord of "The Exchange Hotel." Although he did nothing for me that I can remember, and charged me two dollars and a half per day, still in some way, I don't know how, he left the impression on my mind that he was a clever, kind-hearted old gentleman.

April 6. The wanderer is now at Columbus. This is the first Sunday I have travelled, or failed to attend church, except the one I spent on the steamboat. My travelling to-day was a matter of necessity, owing to the stage arrangements. I telegraphed you from Mobile, and expected a reply here, but none has arrived. I have not heard from you since the 9th of March. This is awful. I shall try to get home sooner, but do not look for me before the 20th. I do not know yet whether I will return by Vicksburg or by Aberdeen.

In fifteen days I hope to kiss you all.

Yours, .

WILLIAM ATSON.

### PART III.

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GEORGIA. SOUTH CAROLINA. NORTH CAROLINA,  
VIRGINIA. EAST TENNESSEE.



## LETTER XXV.

Another stage trip.—Ladies along.—Mercantile gallantry.—Some fun.—  
A message to the negroes.

DECATUR, Ala., June 15, 1856.

DEAR MOLLY:—Only three days have elapsed since I kissed the sleeping Nellie, and tore myself away from you, the clinging little ones, and home. But those three days seem an age, so numerous have been the faces upon which I have looked, and the scenes through which I have passed.

At the depot I had to wait half an hour. A gentleman was there who perplexed my thoughts of home with talk. In the cars I found Manning, whose tongue rattled with anecdotes till we parted at Moscow. Then, a stranger, going to the springs for his health, grew worse, and needed my attention. At Pocahontas were only two coaches for Tuscumbia, and over twenty passengers. After a scuffle for a ticket, I succeeded in getting one; and seeing five ladies in one of the coaches, I gave that the preference. Fortune favoured me. This coach carried the mail, and "made the connection." The other did not even attempt to make it. So, you see, my gallantry saved me twenty-four hours. There was, however, I must confess, something of the merchant about it. I calcu-

lated that if either coach had the preference, or advantage in any particular, it would be that containing the ladies.

We had quite an interesting time. Recently I have not been able to sleep well in the stage. But, from some cause or other, during this trip I could scarcely keep my eyes open—doze, doze, nod, nod.

I was seated in the middle of the middle seat. The strap had stretched so that it threw my head, when leaning back, quite close to the lady behind me. I would fall asleep with my head to the side, or hanging towards my breast. Presently, under the influence of the jolting, and my drowsy struggles to keep it on, it would assume a perpendicular position, vibrate for a while, and then drop right back, as suddenly as though the front muscles of my neck had been quickly severed, striking the lady's bonnet or face. This, and the roar of laughter following it, would wake me. I would join in the laugh, crack a few jokes, and feel wide awake; but, in a moment or two, sleep would again close my eyelids; my head commence bobbing, and the same scene, with amusing variations, be re-enacted.

I intended to rest-to-day, and go to church this morning; but an hour and a half's riding, just at church time, will put me twenty-four hours ahead. The balance of the day I will spend in Huntsville.

Can't you persuade the negroes to attend church regularly? Tell them they serve me so well, I don't want the Devil to get them. Remember me kindly to them. Tell Sukey I shall be very much dissatisfied, if she does not wash better for you and the children.



Kiss the children for me. Give my respects to M., and accept my best love for yourself.

Yours affectionately,

WILLIAM ATSON.

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## LETTER XXVI.

Prefers daughters to sons.—A caution to a haughty person.—Delicate praise.—A good tonic for a sensitive and sickly wife.—A prescription which would astonish the husband of a fast woman.—The children.

June 21, 18—.

DEAR MOLLY:—I am now comfortably ensconced at “The Mills House,” “*The Hotel*,” according to rumour, of Charleston, S. C. I arrived here only a few hours since. Fearing Drake & Co. would close doors until Monday, I rushed around to inquire if letters from home and New York had arrived. They had; and I have perused yours twice already. How it takes me back to Bothwell, with its tall oaks, its evergreens, and its flowers—botanic and human! The sun is about down; you are all assembled in the front porch. How I wish I was there to keep watch with you “upon the steps at home!”

It is my nature to love the weak. Knowing myself and the female character, I was right in preferring daughters to sons. I knew I would love them more ardently; and that they would reciprocate that love with a more unselfish and enduring intensity. I can't bear to see a man love his sons better than his daughters. I judge not, but the fear will creep into my heart, that the soul of such an one is not wholly

sound. There is a pomp and a pride in the peril of resisting the proud, the haughty, the strong. There is a divine luxury in feeling that you are the shield of the pure and the defenceless.

I am not destitute of prudence; and I aim to be, and think I am, generally governed by the dictates of common sense; but if a gigantic man were to pass by me now, and give me a defiant look, the more I thought of his power to crush me into atoms, the stronger would be the temptation "to pitch into him."

Bishop L. didn't know how easily kindness could lead me, when, in a paroxysm of excitement, he shook his finger in my face, and described himself, as he said to me—"I don't blame you, Atson; you can't help having your own way any more than you can the shape of your face!" The best way to render me powerless is to give me power.

I have had many compliments, but the one I appreciate above all, is, that no acquaintance, not even a candidate, ever tries to drive or flatter me into doing anything. They always address my judgment, or appeal to my sense of honour or duty; not dogmatically or haughtily, but kindly and persuasively.

The inference from all this might be, that I was too sensitive and suspicious, seeing haughtiness and defiance where none existed; and thus taking exceptions and getting into difficulties unnecessarily. In early life there might have been some truth in this. It is not, however, the case now. I have found men better than I anticipated. The petty pride, the vanity, the haughtiness, the self-conceit of mere acquaint-

ances rather diverts me. "The heart may be right," I say to myself; "the head is weak. That's all." If, however, a bosom friend desires to keep the flame of my respect and affection for him warmly and brightly burning, he should not let these features of his soul "stick out" too palpably. Their frequent exhibition will, in spite of my philosophy, produce a chilliness, which might become chronic and incurable.

If a woman looks up to me mainly for protection, and is very devoted, when no other society is convenient, let her remember not to be too saucy, too indifferent, or too independent, when circumstances change. This, I confess, would lessen her in my estimation, and chill—and, if I were certain I was not mistaken—eradicate my love.

A third party would scarcely understand the above; but you will understand it, and should interpret, and attempt to impress it indelibly on the person alluded to. You knew, when you wrote that little letter, my weak point; and hence told about your health being more delicate, and dwelt on your being of no account. You see, you have often heard me say I thought it doubtful whether I could love a healthy woman, or a woman who was *some account*—that is, "could weed her own row." You have often heard me say, that, even now, after having for eleven long years guided our tiny bark by the light of the star of love through the rough sea of poverty, I should get a divorce were you to become both healthy and wealthy. It was, therefore, a stroke of policy in you thus to write. But, seeing through it, as I do, it won't answer this time.

I love you enough; and now, when I am far away, in the

midst of strangers, with distance to lend enchantment to an enchanting home, where wife and children are all the husband and father could wish them. I will not allow that love to be increased by any such trickery, It's all stuff. *You are "some account."* You are worth your victuals and clothes, to say the least. You can suffer and sleep half the time, and then do more than a slow person would, scuffling through all the weary hours.

With your ill-health few would do anything. I am certain I would not. And if you do not desire to freeze the deep well of my affection for you, you must yield implicit obedience to the following laws :—

1. Do not work at all. Take a long nap every afternoon ; and spend your active hours in observing, thinking, and directing. This course will "*pay better.*" *That's the argument ad mulierem.* Your thoughtful superintendence will be better for your health, giving you just about exercise enough ; and the prevention of one blunder on the part of the negroes might be worth more than a year's sewing.

2. Your appetite is *delicate*. Delicate food is necessary for you. Buy, therefore, for yourself what you desire. This is economy, and there is no selfishness in it. It would be the height of selfishness in me to indulge in rarities and not share them with those unselfish children, who would deprive themselves of every sweet morsel, in order to force it down their father's throat. But for you to gratify a physical fastidiousness for the sake of that health which is necessary to those self-sacrificing children, is not only *not selfish, but an imperative duty.*



3. Buy *immediately* one dozen best claret, and drink at dinner, every day, half a tumbler, until you find it disagrees with you.

What would the husband of "a fast woman" think, could he read the preceding page? I feel like kneeling down and thanking God for the blessings that surround me. Why should I be selected to have such a wife—a wife so unselfish, that I have to force her to indulge herself in the simplest luxuries? Why should I be blessed with such sweet, industrious children! Alice's unselfishness, like the sunshine, elicits no comment. We are accustomed to it. But I must allude to the little five year old Anna refusing, without being told, to taste a certain "rarity" at dinner, for fear there would be none left for pa, when he returned. Even Nellie wants to give her pa everything. Who teaches them this? *Is it my "no account" wife?*

*Yours,*

WILLIAM ATSON.



## LETTER XXVII.

North Alabama.—M. of Huntsville.—Huntsville enthusiasm.—Huntsville again.—The millionaires.—Sickness and treatment.

CHARLESTON, S. C., June 22, 18—.

MY DEAR WIFE :—I mailed a letter to you this morning I didn't, however, like the first part. At least, I feared you would not. It was too egotistical and metaphysical. So, I concluded to begin another "right off;" and, as the old Baptist preacher, from whom you so often quote, said, "speak in a more plain and simple manner, so that the women and children can understand me."

After going to Huntsville, I had to return to Decatur, where I wrote you. On my return to Huntsville, Mr. M. called for me at the hotel, and took me out to his country-home, a mile or two distant. There I spent the night. M.'s style of living is unostentatiously grand. The house and the furniture are plain and massive. There is no parade. Everything is quiet and orderly. Here, luxury seems so simple, and so at home, that the plainest peasant would scarcely notice it, unless his attention was specially called to it. It was precisely such as I would expect to see were I to visit the country-seat of an old English nobleman, whose ancestors, for centuries, had

been reared in luxurious affluence, and who had never seen anything else.

The grove around, with its forest trees, its evergreens, and its summer-houses, was beautiful; while Mt. Salon looked down upon and poured through it its cool and healthful breezes.

The whole of North Alabama is lovely, especially at this season. As the car rushes from valley to valley, the traveller is enchanted with the clean and well tilled fields, dotted with the green cotton, or waving with the luxuriant corn, and surrounded by the distant hills. It is almost as pretty as Texas; and Huntsville is the favoured spot in this beautiful region.

This village is located upon a hill, in the midst of a valley literally environed by mountains. From beneath this hill, gushes a mighty spring of cool, pellucid water.

Twenty years ago I drank of it. I was in my "highland dress," "bound for the wars." I was an enthusiast then. My country was the goddess I worshipped; and fame whispered, I'll be "there to tell who bleeds." I am an enthusiast now; but my enthusiasm takes a bolder, a steadier, a higher flight. I never can grow old. It is a moral impossibility. And so long as I am young, I shall be enthusiastic. Can one grow old, who sees the wise, good God, *everywhere, in everything*?—in the storm of faction and fanaticism that threatens his own, his native land; in the poverty which blasted all his young, ambitious hopes; in the afflictions that have come, or that may come upon the wife of his bosom, or the angel trio that hang about her knees? Fear not: He will be with you. The honest shall be saved, is a doctrine which will preserve

forever the youth of the upright. I believe God Almighty would turn the heavens upside down, and shiver the material creation into atoms, rather than permit one truly honest, good-meaning, struggling soul to suffer, without giving that soul an opportunity to extract from that suffering blessings sufficient amply to repay him for it.

Paul was honest; and, on his way to Damascus, the Bible says, God created a focus of light, brighter than the midday sun, and threw its concentrated radiance into the eyes of the bewildered sinner, in order to convince him of his error.

I don't want any moping, melancholy, miserable descendants; and these views are a panacea for, an antidote to, all the complicated ills humanity is heir to. Teach them to the children.

Physical suffering cannot make any one permanently miserable. That experiment has been fully tested. History vouches for the fact; and my observation confirms the record. You are not miserable. You enjoy life a great deal; and yet, if all the moments that you felt well and vigorous during the last eleven years were added together, the whole would not amount to a week. Thus it is with others, who might be mentioned. If the soul be sound, and the intellect does not torture it with some horribly incorrect notions of God, a dyspeptic stomach or a disordered liver may depress the spirits for a while, but the depression will not last long; and, even while it lasts, will not go deep enough to justify its possessor in styling himself miserable. Old Job, whilst grunting and groaning forth his sublime lamentations, could not help feeling somewhat happy in the very climax of his agonies. For he

rested his soul upon God ; and so intense was his faith, that he exclaimed, even then, "But He knows the way that I take. When He hath tried me, I shall come forth as pure gold."

*Well, well, well.* I started to write about Huntsville, and have gotten back to Job. I don't know whether you will call the foregoing metaphysics or not—but the deed is done ; and if I were to tear up this scroll, and attempt to write another, I might plunge still farther into the dim old past, or land at some worse place.

Huntsville is blessed with everything wealth can bestow. It has fine churches, fine schools, fine society. It has more advantages, and fewer disadvantages, now that the railroad connecting it with the world is about completed, than any village I have visited. Were I wealthy, and seeking a home in which to spend the evening of my days, pleasantly and quietly, there my search would cease. It would suit you and the children too. If sickness visits the vale, the mountain tops are in sight.

From Huntsville I came, without stopping, except for meals, to Atlanta. Stevenson is at the junction of the Memphis and Charleston with the Nashville and Chattanooga road ; the road through the mountains which I described to you some months ago.

In the cars I found two old acquaintances—both millionaires. They stopped at Chattanooga. In order to have "some fun," I asked the landlord if he knew them ? He said "no." "I do," said I ; "and you had better keep your eyes on them. They seem to have no baggage." He began to watch so energetically, I gave him the wink ; but he promised to carry

on the joke. After supper, I started again. The cars rattled on for eighteen or twenty miles, and then ran off the track. This delayed the train four hours; but did not interfere with my plans at all.

The next day I felt so unwell, that I had to lie down most of the few hours I remained in Atlanta; but still attended to my business, and went on to Madison that night. The bad feeling about my head increased, and I became sick at the stomach. I think I must have had just such an attack as Nellie's. It lasted about as long—twenty-four hours. I treated myself as I did her. That is, missed a meal, and gave myself no medicine. It would have been rather a luxury to have had the little attack at home, with you and Alice by my side, and Anna and Nellie scrambling over me. For when lying down I was quite comfortable.

I am now in first-rate health. Always give my respects to M.; and remember me kindly to the servants.

Your affectionate husband,

WILLIAM ATSON.



## LETTER XXVIII.

Epicurus.—Georgia.—“Nil Desperandum.”—Description of a peculiar species of inhabitants in Orangeburg and Anderson, S. C.—A fight with them.—Forgiveness.—The hugging couple again.—The City of Charleston.—A pleasant elixir for the Abolitionists.—St. Michael’s.

ANDERSON, S. C., Saturday night, June 28, 18—.

DEAR MOLLY:—I arrived here an hour before sundown, and, remembering that this evening was herald to the Sabbath, I hurried around attending to business; and after I had gotten through was told by young Mr. Bolton, to whose father I brought a letter of introduction, and who was kindly introducing me, that the cars would not again leave till half-past three o’clock the day after to-morrow. So that I have not only Sunday to rest, but the greater part of Monday. How shall I spend my time?

The reason I do not suffer from low spirits is, that I practise in *morals* as well as *physic*, upon the principle “that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.” *I look ahead, and lay plans to prevent disagreeable sensations.* This is why I ask the question now, how shall I spend my time?

The answer is—read, walk about, attend church, reflect; and whenever the home-feeling begins to produce home-sick-

ness, put down your book, cease your ramblings and your reflections, and do the next most pleasant thing to seeing home, that is, write to your sweet wife, the mother of your sweet children. But be cautious to write no more at a time than just the quantity requisite to relieve the acuteness of the home-sickness; or the result will be either that you will write more than a reasonable husband ought to require his wife to read, or be afflicted with hours of weariness and depression, to which you cannot apply the exhausted remedy.

Thus you perceive I design, during the ensuing forty-eight hours, prolonging the pleasure of writing to you, by doing so only at intervals; and then, "O miserable wretch!" you might appropriately exclaim, from a calculating selfishness worthy the truest disciple of Epicurus.

To return to the journal. I left off at Madison, a beautiful village in Georgia. By-the-bye, in describing the poverty of Georgia's\* soil, I may have done some injustice to this portion of the state. On the route from Chattanooga to Madison, there is not much sand. The red clay only is apparent, which relieves the stranger from the apprehension of being swallowed.

By way of apology to Mrs. G. for my criticisms on her native state, say to her, that I saw in it cotton two or three inches, and oats with heads almost matured from a foot to a

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\* In speaking of the *appearance* of Georgia here and elsewhere, as well as South Carolina, North Carolina, and Virginia, the Author presumes the reader to be acquainted with their *real* resources—their astonishing productiveness.

foot and a half high; and young growing corn that looked green.

The sandy, piney region does not fully begin till you reach Warrenton. From there to Charleston, pines and sand prevail.

Tell Mrs. G. also, that I do not think she ought to be ashamed of her birth-place—*I believe God made Georgia*; and not only that He made it, but that its creation was designed expressly to tax the ingenuity and develop the skill and energies of man. It is a mighty monument of poverty, upon which man has written all over its surface “*Nil desperandum.*” Every house in its piney wildernesses; every manufactory therein; every plough furrow in its sands; every stalk of cotton, corn, oats, wheat that extracts its green colour from the white soil beneath; every village that thrives; and above all, every railroad track that rests upon it, say to the traveller—“*Nil desperandum.*” Every neigh of the steam-horse repeats the motto. The song of the car-wheels, as they rattle forth their monotonous music, is “*Nil desperandum.*”

Every hypochondriac should travel through Georgia, and that part of South Carolina which extends from Augusta to Charleston. If such a trip didn't cure him, the doctors had as well give him up. The propriety of indulging hope, and working perseveringly under the most unfavourable circumstances, is here practically demonstrated. Wherever the observant traveller turns his eyes the demonstration is visible, and it is “ding-donged” into his ears with audible and unceasing vociferation. Properly considered, its hopeful precept will follow him into whatsoever circumstances, entanglements,

difficulties, afflictions, duty leads him, nerving his soul for the contest, and driving even from its porteullis the advancing demons—Depression and Gloom. You are now in the midst of peculiarly depressing and gloomy influences. Can you not allow Hope to engrave “*Nil desperandum*” upon your heart? If not, “pack up your duds” and start for Georgia right off.

Since leaving Madison ten days ago, besides spending two days in Charleston and one in Columbia, I have stopped in fifteen or sixteen villages, and made from four to six acquaintances in each.

They do not call the divisions in this state counties, but districts. Each district has a court-house of the same name. These court-houses are the principal villages, and generally have stores around a square—the house of law being in the centre. They are all situated on elevated and undulating ground, and are quiet, shady, and pretty.

Only two are worthy of a distinctive notice. They are Orangeburg and this place. Their only peculiarity consists in being densely populated, in addition to the white and black people, with a Lilliputian race of a reddish-brown complexion. These inhabitants are, doubtless owing to their size, very timid. They only make their appearance at night; and not then, unless they think it too dark to be seen. They seem to live on peaceable and friendly terms with the other classes of *residents*; but the inhospitable and cowardly scoundrels, under cover of night and under the bed cover, will suck the very life-blood from a *stranger*.

I have, however, the proud consolation of knowing that I

killed fifty of them in one battle at Orangeburg, and twenty-five in another at this place.

War is disagreeable under all circumstances; but there is always some pleasure, both in the excitement of battle, and in the post-contemplation of one's skill and prowess. No old Indian hunter can beat me in these *melées*. My plan is to blow out the light, get in bed, lie—like the brave Jackson in the Benton difficulty—as though I were dead, until the enemy collects and commences the attack. I then jump up, strike a light, and slay as long as a foe is visible. This operation, the Jackson or opossum part and all, I repeat every few minutes till the attacks cease.

Honesty, however, compels me to say, that in Orangeburg, alias Chincetown, I was conquered and forced to make two disgraceful retreats. After having killed fifty, I lay down awhile; then jumped up again, and perceiving that about as many more of a larger and stronger kind, with courage stimulated by hunger depicted on their blood-thirsty visages, had assembled in the centre of my downy couch—I reflected a moment, slipped on my clothes, retreated to the parlor, and lay down on the sofa. Alas for human hopes, and human courage! the attack was renewed there. I retreated to two hard-bottomed chairs in the middle of the room, and snoozed for an hour; when I was awakened by the landlady saying, it would be 4 o'clock by the time I arrived at the depot. After paying her fifty cents for my *delectable* lodging, I bade her a kind and respectful adieu; and cast a parting, but not revengeful thought upon my conquering enemy.



“The linden tree perfumes, when riven,  
The axe that laid it low;  
Let man, who hopes to be forgiven,  
Forgive and bless his foe.”

The solemn questions I now wish to propound are, whether a woman who permits chinchés to infest her house, is a lady, either in a social or moral sense? *Can she be a Christian?* Does not such carelessness indicate both a want of polish and a want of religion? Is it not filthy, selfish, inhospitable, uncharitable?

As General Coffee said to Colonel Ephraim Foster, when the latter inquired whether he thought him a fool—perhaps I “*had better not press*” these questions, as you are a woman and a housekeeper; and now is the season of the chinch’s murderous discontent.

In going to Chincetown, I saw the kissing and hugging young married couple, of whom I wrote on a former tour. There was nothing of the sort now. At tea I said: “I think I saw you on your way from Chattanooga, just after you were married. You don’t seem to be as fond of each other as you were then.” Both coloured deeply, but laughed. Their friends took the hint, and laughed more heartily. After this introduction we became quite well acquainted. Their conduct doubtless originated in thoughtlessness. But men and women ought to think.

Charleston resembles New Orleans and Mobile in its flat location. It is, however, not so well-built as either. There are many fine buildings, but in their midst stand many of the old frame ones. These latter I regarded, at first, as very

objectionable; but as I became accustomed to their appearance, I grew rather pleased with them. Everything in this young and glorious country of ours, bears so novel an aspect that antiquity throws a charm even around the common and the homely. Just think of the fears, the excitement, the hopes the human heart experienced in those old houses in the days of Sumter, and Marion, and Rutledge. Just think of the brave men and the venerable matrons, the trembling maidens and the prattling children that plotted and whispered and told the news, and prayed, and loved, and played within those old walls sixty or eighty years ago. Just listen to the shouts of patriot joy they echoed. Just see the lights that illumined their windows when Cornwallis yielded his sword to Washington, and Tyranny staggering beneath a mortal wound loosened his hold upon the new-born nation.

I never understood before why Charleston, one of our oldest cities, has never grown more populous. The reason is that it has no contiguous back country fit to live in. On one side of its triangular location is the bay. On another is a low, flat, poor, piney country. On the third is a swamp, a sojourn in which at night is as fatal to the stranger as breathing the nocturnal effluvia of the Pontine marshes.

The city itself is said to be remarkably healthy—its health being only occasionally interrupted by the visitation of an epidemic. Why it should be healthy I cannot easily perceive, but it seems to be really the case. For never before have I seen in any city such a large proportion of children, white and black, all looking healthy, cheerful, and happy.

I have never examined the census report on this point, but

it appears to me that one-half of the population is black. Sunday, you know, is the gala day of the negroes everywhere in the South. Here they *swarm* along the streets. This at first was rather provoking. To be looking for the pretty face of a white southern lass, and see ebony; or, to quote from Governor Wise, "ebo-shin and gizzard foot" at every step, required the exercise of patience on the part of so great a lover of the beautiful.

I consoled myself, however, by reflecting upon the astonishment of an *honest* Abolitionist, could he behold the whites and blacks perambulating these streets together. The care-worn or thoughtful countenances of the former saying, "I have debts to pay." "I have children to provide for." "I want an office." The oily skins, the shining teeth, the laughing eyes of the latter replying, "I enjoy the present. I take no thought for to-morrow. Master got to support me here sick or well, and God will take care of me hereafter."

Butler, instead of making speeches against the Abolitionists, ought to invite them to Charleston. If the argument of a visit failed to convince them of their error, they might as well be given over "to hardness of heart, and reprobacy of mind to believe a lie, that they may be damned," by a dissolution of the Union.

Sunday, June 29. To-day a week ago I attended church in the above-named city. Through respect for a certain lady, who adorns Bothwell with her pure presence, I asked for an Episcopal church. St. Michael's, with its tall steeple and its melancholy chiming clock, was pointed out to me.

The exterior of a pretty little Episcopal church at Mont-

gomery, Ala., where I heard Bishop Cobb preach, struck me as rather peculiar. The cupola was at one corner, giving the sacred edifice the appearance of a handsome little belle wearing one of those little bonnets, which require to be held on by a maid following the wearer, or of a moustached fop with a gold-headed cane in his hand, and his hat on the side of his cranium. But it was the interior of St. Michael's that arrested my attention by its singularity. Its lower story was only a little above where the basement should have been, and the gallery was only a little above where the lower story should have been. Some of the pews were very small, others two or three times as large as usual, and others again had the seats in them so arranged that the occupants would necessarily sit with their backs to the preacher. The same comical arrangement prevailed to some extent in the gallery, which seemed to constitute fully as important a part of the church as the lower floor. The pulpit was, however, the thing about which my thoughts forced me to smile. It was located below, about one-third of the way from the posterior end of the building, being on one side, and consequently much nearer to one gallery than the other. It had two stories, one in front of the other, and was somewhat in the shape of a summer-house, though built of heavy materials. Behind the pulpit there was a deep alcove, ornamented with a golden star in the centre, and gilt letters on either side. The minister read some prayers in the lower story of the pulpit, and some in the deep alcove. In neither of these places could a large portion of the audience see him. Those in the gallery, on his left, were blessed with a vision of his head only when he ascended *the second tier* in



order to read his sermon. I thought this would be a fine church for that Catholic priest to act in who betted he could make one-half of his audience laugh and the other half cry at the same time. I could not help thinking that this pulpit was admirably adapted for the performances of a monkey with a red jacket on. You see he could show his agility by jumping from one story to the other, and then to the top. After getting on top he could grin and curl his tail, and wink at those in the gallery, so as to make them giggle and shout, whilst those below, *not knowing* what those above were giggling and shouting about, would "bring down the house" with applauding echoes.

I saw one pretty woman there. In fact, being pretty, I might call her "a galaxy of beauty," for her dress was so low in the neck, I saw, or imagined I saw, the beginning of "the milky way."

*I make fun of nothing serious.* These were the ridiculous things I noticed, and the above are the ridiculous thoughts they engendered. Strange inconsistency. The minister and the congregation, worshipping in this fantastic edifice, were unusually plain, unostentatious, and devout. The services were solemn, and the sermon feeling and sensible.

I do not like to end in this way, but have no more room. You and those little sweeties know you have my heart. Kiss them for me.

Yours,

WILLIAM ATSON.



## LETTER XXIX.

Sunday.—Home.—“Little Dorritt.”—Dickens.—Clay.—The days of yore.

YORKVILLE, S. C., July 6, 185-.

MY DEAR WIFE :—

“Another weekday’s work is done,  
Another Sabbath is begun ;”

An institution that *alone* stamps the seal of wisdom and goodness on the brow of its Author—a day for shutting the physical eyes and opening the eyes of the heart—a day of rest to the weary worker and the weary thinker—a day for the worn wayfarer to think of home and heaven.

At Greenville, a pretty, one-street, shady village, where a railroad ends, I hired a buggy and driver, and passing through the districts and towns of Lawrence, Spartanburg, and Union, am now in the district of York, and the hamlet of Yorkville, where a railroad begins.

To-morrow I start for Charlotte, N. C., at which place I hope to receive two letters from you.

When will these restless roamings cease? When shall I see you? Shall I ever see you and all the little ones again? I almost invariably think of you as I left you. But occasionally, when I reflect on the length of time which has elapsed

since the date of your last letter, the last solemn question will obtrude itself upon my soul.

When shall I enjoy the luxury, not only of seeing you all once more, but of sitting down quietly with you upon Bothwell's green summit, and saying, Henceforth I will not leave you; henceforth the little ones shall have their playmate father always in reach; henceforth I will partake daily of the caresses of wife and children; henceforth I will be with you in every trial, and participate with you in every enjoyment?

As my children, young as they are, believe, although they may not understand the mystery, that I FORSAKE *them* for *their benefit*, even so I believe that my Father "who is in heaven" is leading me in the right direction, though the pathway be dark, meandering, and mysterious. And it would indicate horrible self-conceit thus to believe; and yet to doubt that he holds in the hollow of his protecting hand the purer beings I have left behind.

I finished Harper for July before sending it. Dickens is putting the community somewhat in the same fix Pisistratus Caxton did, when he named his novel "My Novel." Now who could have the heart to abuse *my* novel? said his father. And who could have the heart to abuse "Little Dorritt?" say I.

You might object to the snuffling Panks, and the silly, good-natured, garrulous Flora. You might even object to the sedate Clennam (and I do feel provoked with him for not *loving* his little protege), and many other things already out, and to be published; but you would have to *specify*, you would

be afraid to say "I don't like 'Little Dorritt,'" for fear some one should suppose you meant, not the book, but the heroine.

I love Dickens. He is the most persevering and powerful preacher of charity now living. He has no superior in his knowledge of man's heart, and in ability to turn it inside out. But it is not for these qualities I love him most. It is for his deep insight into female character, and the ease, the power, the pathos with which he reveals to the world the unselfishness, the tact, the prudence, the purity of true-hearted women. Has he learned his lesson from association with a good mother, good sisters, a good wife, and good daughters; or is his knowledge the mere intuition of genius?

Poor "Little Dorritt!" do you not feel for her, tortured, as the last number leaves her, with that indefinable sensation, which the modest but unloved maiden experiences, when Cupid first shoots the fatal arrow, and which would eat the bloom from the cheek and life from the heart of such an one, before she would acknowledge, even to herself, that its name is love.

Afer perusing Harper I began the Life of Clay by Sargent, a small book I brought along, in order to refresh my memory upon certain political measures connected with the exciting topics of the day.

For the first time in my life I am at a loss how to vote. What a patriot, and not a party man, should do at the ensuing presidential election, is a query difficult to answer. Mr. Fillmore is a great favourite of mine, and I dislike Democracy. But Democracy has taken the right position upon the all-absorbing question of slavery, and I am fearful, that voting for Fillmore, who stands but little if any chance of election,

will be equivalent to voting for Fremont—the Black Republican candidate. And you know that whilst I *dislike* Jesuitical Democracy, I *hate* that sectionalism, which wages war upon the Constitution—the only cement of our Union.

I shall wait and watch, and only determine how to cast my vote, when the advanced canvass has thrown all its light upon the subject.

Reading old Clay's life carried me back to the days of yore. I lived over again the canvass of 1844. Jones, Brown, Smith, Jenkins, Johnson were around me, wild with the enthusiasm of youth. I stood again on the steps of a hotel in F., and, amid the shouts of the cheering multitude, told them how, in a few weeks, the nation, in a voice louder than the roar of ten thousand Niagara cataracts, would proclaim the defeat of little Jimmy Polk, and the triumph of Henry Clay, the statesman, the orator, the sage of Ashland, the man of the age. Then I walked along the streets in F., and met a strange young woman, than whom in all my travels I have never seen one more beautiful, when the bright eyes sparkle with emotion, or the excited intellect kindles the almost perfect features with unearthly radiance. Then, I hear again the voice of Jones, saying, "Atson, I am going to give a party. It will not do to neglect *that girl*, merely because she is staying at Jackson's—that fiery embodiment of Locofocoism, and you must escort her to it."

I lived over again the walk up to Jackson's, *from a sense of duty*. I was again electrified by the remark of that beautiful girl, as we journeyed to the party, "I have a hard time with the Democracy at my cousin's; you are the first Whig I

have seen." "Good heavens, Miss, are you a Whig?" I remembered, how the affirmative reply banished the cold sense of duty; how I handed her into the room; how I glided about, and said: "Boys she is a Whig;" how the boys flocked around and made her acquaintance; and how the strange girl was the belle of the village, from that moment till she and I stood together at the bridal altar, and swore to be faithful until death. I wept again over the defeat of Clay, and again thanked God that the strange girl was still my loved and loving wife.

Kiss the children, and teach them to love me just as I am. Don't make a pretty picture of the rough reality.

Remember me kindly to M. Tell the servants how much I esteem them, and how firmly I believe they will do their duty.

Yours,

WILLIAM ATSON.



## LETTER XXX.

Columbia, S. C.—Another effort to cheer a sickly wife.—A cheering prescription.—Fashionable humility.—The little washerwoman.—The beautiful story-teller.—Childhood.

COLUMBIA, S. C., July 12, 1856.

MY DEAR WIFE:—I am again in this beautiful little city, where green trees adorn the wide streets, keeping the brick walls cool, and refreshing the eye with country aspect and reminiscences.

I came from Charlotte, N. C., to-day, where last night I received, and perused, and reperused yours of the 20th ultimo. You have laughed so often at the quizzical manner with which I described Larkin telling me he "was sorry his wife was dead," that I am almost afraid to say, "I am sorry you are so unwell." It is nevertheless the fact, smile as you may.

I do, however, complain of myself, that I do not in my absence sympathize more with your sufferings. Buoyant with health, possessing a head that never aches, a heart that never beats too fast, a stomach that always relishes food, nerves that rarely if ever tingle or tremble with aught but pleasant emotions, firmness enough to face the Present, faith sufficient to look calmly at the Future, a memory "too short" to retain

the disagreeable in the Past, an imagination that gilds the whole with light, and always sees Hope smiling in the background of the darkest picture, it is very difficult for me to be miserable out of sight of actual visible suffering.

But ever since I read your letter, your pale sweet face has haunted me. I have ceased to look at the queen of beauty, as she gracefully glides along, with head erect, intellect enthroned upon her majestic forehead, and heaven in her dark and beaming eyes.

I am thinking of you as I have watched beside you many a day, and many a night, in many a year. I am thinking of you as I have lifted you weak and worn from bed to bed, as I have carried you about the house, and into the carriage, and on to the boat, in these stalwart arms. I am thinking of you in more critical moments, when the clammy sweat of collapse broke forth, the pulse seemed to have made its final flicker, the hue of death marked your features; and, all alone, I, with a husband's heart and weeping eyes, had to pour down the desperate remedies with the bold firmness of the callous physician. And now that I am absent, that you are out of reach of my arms, that I cannot kiss away the falling tear, or joke away the rising sigh, what can I do to relieve the melancholy with which *physical* causes, irremovable by medicine, seem to depress you?

You say, I will think you are hysterical. Well, what of that? Are you any more responsible for hysterics depressing your spirits, than you would be for a felon throbbing, or a tooth aching? Not one particle. But as you would resist the childish act of crying, because of these painful afflictions,

so you must resist, with the moral and the mental powers, the depressing influence of debility or disease. This I know you try to do, but, unaided, you cannot succeed. I want, therefore, to give you a prescription, a weapon bright from the armory of heaven, with which to fight the foe.

Suffering is either caused by our own imprudence, is permitted by the Deity for the purpose of teaching us ourselves, and our duty, in order to *educate* us for coming time, as well as for eternity; or it is the result of the action of laws, physical, mental, and moral, over which we have no control, and by the operation of which we become innocent sufferers.

Whatever position you occupy, in relation to these propositions, I have comfort to offer. Have you brought suffering on yourself by imprudence? Learn not to be indiscreet or imprudent again in anything. And the teaching the lesson thus learnt to your children, and through them to your grand and great grandchildren to the thousandth generation, will more than repay you for the present affliction, "which is but for a moment." Is your suffering permitted in order to teach you, with all your delicacy, with all your exquisite effeminacy, with your utter destitution of all \*masculinity, that you are naturally extremely firm, extremely independent, and that in the vigour of health you might forget who you are, and who made you. If so, learn quickly the lesson of humility.

Now, I am fully aware that you are very discreet and very prudent, and that the greatest independence of character in relation to our fellows, is perfectly compatible with the deepest

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\* Masculinity, "a made word" I believe.

humility towards our Creator—see Washington praying in the woods. I therefore do not regard you as occupying either of these positions, but as being an innocent sufferer. This I regard as the highest position a human being can occupy. It is radiant with all the glory, and entitles its occupant to all the rewards, of a *continuous* martyrdom.

The innocent and the helpless are the care of God. Every real sigh they breathe, every disagreeable sensation they experience, every pain they suffer, brings God *in debt* to them. And they need not be afraid to *trust* Him. His credit is good. To use a mercantile phrase, He “is No. 1, extra.” The exceeding excellence of this debtor consists, not simply in the fact that He is supremely honest and supremely solvent, but that He is infinitely wise, and made, and knows, and loves his creditor; and will so compound the interest as to make the debt very large, and *so time* the payments that the recipient will enjoy the greatest happiness and realize the greatest benefit therefrom.

I wish I could impregnate your soul, and every innocent, suffering human soul, with this omnipotent seminal principle of happiness. The battle with pain would still continue, but the smile of the assured conqueror would ever illumine the countenance of the sufferer.

But you will say, “I am not innocent.”

*This is not so.* And I think I can make you sensible that this very indelicate expression to a lady is the truth.

I assert that you do more and do better than nine hundred and ninety-nine out of every thousand at least of my sex would under the same afflictions: This I would not have you believe,



because it would puff you up, and then I would be compelled to take you down "a button hole or two." But I will tell you, what you can without immodesty believe, and what you ought to believe, and what you will believe, if you will think and examine your heart and your conduct, after having thrown off the trammels of that whining and groaning humility which hypocrisy has introduced into the church, which is not incompatible with the most disgusting self-complacency, and which leads many good people into self-deception and falsehood. It is that your conduct is based upon a fixed intention and deliberate effort to do right, and that you have done and are doing the best you could or can in the light and under the circumstances in which you were or are placed. Now, you cannot deny this; and, if its denial would be untrue, you are innocent, and, if innocent and suffering, God is becoming your debtor, and He will pay, and *pay liberally, and pay at the right time.*

Do you suppose I could attend suffering little children, and suffering, pure women; that I could see and think of my sweet wife suffering for no fault of her own year after year, and bearing that suffering with a heroism that would put to shame a thousand such martyrs as the books tell of, who merely passed through the petty tragedy of a few days' punishment, ending in their being burnt, or hanged, or having their heads cut off, thereby achieving a perpetuity of fame, as if any man, who is a man, couldn't, for the sake of honour, or country, or religion, stand such trifles without trembling or grunting--do you suppose, I say, that I could witness these continuous afflictions of the innocent without the belief I have



avowed, and not curse God? I should despise myself were I mean enough to refrain from it.

Some might consider such expressions irreverent. They are, probably, to their Deity. But they and I worship different beings. Perhaps *their* God don't like to hear the subjects of honesty, solvency, justice, discussed. Perhaps he won't *pay*. *My* God loves to see the heart heave with generous emotions. He loves to hear the lips express righteous indignation. Justice and mercy are the habitants of His throne.

Irreverent or not, this little effort to cheer you, this rough expression of my opinion, the contemplation of the joys this doctrine properly understood, considered, and acted upon would produce, has stirred the usually calm sea of happiness within my soul into a tempest of enjoyment. My now suffering wife, my little girls that *may* suffer, the sick and the poor children everywhere, the women in the mines, the women with mean husbands, the sewing women, the diseased women, the whole army of obscure martyrs, have passed in review before me, and to every one I have whispered, "God will pay you." How could my eyes be otherwise than tearful, and my heart otherwise than happy, when the answering smile on each wan face said, "I thank you; I am happier even now."

You doubtless have two questions ready for me. First: Is it not pharisaical to think we are innocent? The bragging Pharisee was a hypocrite, praying at the corners of the streets, paying tithes of mint, and anise, and cumin, articles that didn't cost anything, while he neglected the weightier matters of the law, having all the form and none of the substance of righteousness. He consequently was lying, and knew that he

was lying, whenever he intimated by acts, or said in words, "I am good."

Now you will admit that lying is wrong. Well, is it any more a lie for a guilty person to assert his innocence than for an innocent person to assert his guilt? Paul says, "think soberly and righteously;" that is, correctly.

I press the argument upon this point, because, while this *fashionable* humility is a mere mask and plaything of the deceitful and the self-conceited, it presses heavily upon the hearts of the honest and modest. The former claim, amid their whines and groans, more than they deserve. The latter are afraid to claim anything. From the souls of the last my doctrine lifts the ponderous incubus.

Your second question will be, where did you learn this doctrine, *that God will pay?* I learned it from the inner light, that lighteneth every man who cometh into the world; from the pure reason that sits supreme above the other mental faculties, and which, though sometimes obscured by the misty and labyrinthine theories spun by its subordinates, always shines brightly and sees rightly. I not only learned it from this ethereal spark breathed into Adam, this God in man, from which there is no appeal, but also from the Bible. "Blessed are they that mourn, for they shall be comforted." "I reckon that the sufferings of this present world are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed." The mighty poet, Job, suffered, *being innocent*, and *God paid him*.

Hoping this response to the gloomy portion of your letter will accomplish its design, and enable you to fight the battle of martyrdom not only heroically but *cheerfully*, I turn my

thoughts from your pale, sweet face to the lovely little washer-woman, and the beautiful story-teller, that "lays" everything she does wrong on "Anny."

How completely I can realize the scene! Emily goes off on an errand, Alice to get her lesson, and you become absorbed in writing. The idea of washing suggests itself to Anna. She gets the basin, and begins with some old rag. Nellie "pitches in," and is not particular what she puts in the water. The idea becomes a passion with Anna, and she no longer hesitates to wash anything in reach. And thus they both proceed to pull down and wash, sometimes the floor and sometimes the clothes. Presently the basin is turned over. You are aroused, look around and find the room a pool, and half the things in it bedabbled. You speak; Anna looks frightened. But "the brat of beauty," with the calmness of real innocence, and with as honest a countenance as was ever placed in front of a human head, looks straight at you, and says, "'Twas Anny." The condensation and boldness of this denial and accusation, the grace of her position, as with a wet garment in her hands she turns her beaming face upon you, does the work. You kiss her, and let "Anny" off.

It seems a pity, that the radiance of Paradise should begin to disappear from childhood just so soon as it tastes the apple that contains the knowledge of good and evil. Children are sweet, if females, and properly managed through all the stages of youth. But from one to five years of age is the period in which Heaven itself seems to me to dwell in and about them. I shrink from the idea of Anna's passing out of this delectable epoch. The baby has several years yet to revel therein, and

intoxicate with her loveliness her admiring father. Alice, who made us happy so long by her childish sweetness, must not be forgotten. I almost wish she was still young enough to be a little washerwoman or a little story-teller. But this cannot be. She must now make us happy by honouring and obeying us, and setting a good example—an example of truthfulness, patience, and industry—to those young imitators that watch the older ones so closely. I am afraid I have done her, and may do those small chaps, an injury by being so childish a companion when I am with them. Teach Alice the motto my father taught me: “Seriousness and solid happiness are inseparable.” Teach her that jokes, amusements, sight-seeing, &c., must be merely the recesses, the playtimes, the recreations of the happy soul; that making a business of these things is idleness, and leads to misery. Kiss them all for me. Remember me to M. and the servants.

Your affectionate husband,

WILLIAM ATSON.



## LETTER XXXI.

Miss Molly Murray and Henry Clay.—The praises of his foes.—The injustice of his friends.—Comparison of Clay, Webster, and Calhoun.—Clay's only superior.—The meeting between Clay, and his only equal.—The Author determines how to vote.

CHERAW, S. C., July 20, 18—.

DEAR MOLLY:—Since mailing my last letter, I have visited the villages of Winnsboro, Kingsville, Camden, Lancaster, Darlington, and Cheraw; besides passing through many other towns with names, a grocery, and but little else. Your gloomy epistle led me out of the path of journalism, to which I now return.

I had begun to tell of reading the life of Clay, and this landed me in the days of the maidenhood of Miss Molly Murray. If I recollect aright, I designed to talk of the old statesman who was slandered by his enemies, while living, and is suffering from the hands of his friends, now that he is dead.

All praise him. Foes outdo friends in panegyrics upon him, whom their lies defrauded of the presidency. Perhaps it is *Penitence* seeking this mode of restitution, which gives such pathos to their eloquence. Even now all parties are in-



voking his name and his sayings, to rally his old partisans to their respective standards; and that name is mighty and will prevail. His true-hearted disciples know his voice. The injustice done him is by the Everetts and Choates of the North, who speak from so lofty an altitude that the Union listens; and whose speeches are calculated to produce the impression that Webster was a greater man than Clay.

This is not only not so, but the fact is that the former, mighty as he was, is second-rate compared with the latter. Clay was an agile giant, walking *ahead* in the rough and untrodden path of American statesmanship—felling the trees, bridging the larger streams, removing the smaller obstructions, leaping the ravines, and moving with apparent carelessness but chamois step and eagle eye, over the rocks and along the jagged edges of the precipices, carrying upon his shoulder the lever of political truth, and “blazing out” with his hatchet for the benefit of future travellers the way over which he journeyed. In *this* way, following with ponderous step—leaving his foot-prints even in the rocks, and making the road still plainer by his skilful workmanship—the giant Webster occasionally overtook the giant Clay, struggling to remove some obstacle too great for himself alone, and putting his shoulder to the lever, with equal strength aided in removing it. This illustration gives the whole difference between these great patriots.

Calhoun, the other member of the triumvirate of talent, cannot bear a comparison with either. His power of expression was unsurpassed. His mind was quick and strong; but it was narrow, and *consequently* he was an ultraist. And

though a sincere, ardent Southern and pro-slavery man, he may be justly considered the great abolition breeder—the exciting cause and main author of that *anti-slavery* party which elected Banks, and now threatens to dissolve the Union.

Adam never had but one son superior to Henry Clay. The world knows who he was. Clay, never in all his long public and eventful life met but one *equal*; and that was in a little private room, in a hotel at the Capital, when the dying statesman, in his last speech, taught the doctrine of George Washington to Louis Kossuth.

I like to think and write about these men. I love them with no common love. My affection for the great and good, the incomparable Washington, is precisely the same as that for my own good father. The remembrance of these two strikes the same chord, and makes the same music in my soul. Reminiscences of the others arouse similar emotions, only not quite so deep and potent.

Although Mr. Clay and myself interchanged views on an interesting topic, and I have seen him in Washington and New Orleans, I never sought a personal introduction. I always hesitated to approach great men in the zenith of their power. I can't bear even the appearance of sycophancy. It would, however, do my very soul good, quietly and privately now in the hour of his poverty and gloom, forgotten and libelled by the world, to take Kossuth by the hand, look him in the eye, and say to him in that tone the sincerity of which no one, whether acquaintance or stranger, has ever seemed to doubt: "I love you. If it would aid your cause, I would die for it. Do not be discouraged; God makes such men as you

only for some great purpose, and your destiny will be accomplished."

Wishing to crowd my carpet-bag with no unnecessary luggage, I send back per mail this *Life of Clay*. I prize it highly, because it is so suitable for reference—touching just enough upon the main incidents of his history to refresh completely the memory of one who has been conversant with it. A glance at it will interest you. The funeral eulogies, and the funeral sermon—that exquisite gem of pulpit eloquence by Butler, whose manner and mournful tones I once described to you—will certainly thrill your bosom with emotions incompatible with misery or melancholy. Clay's shorter speeches, and the extracts from those more lengthy, will as certainly elicit your admiration; whilst the descriptions of the triumphal marches of the citizen-statesman, amid the shouts of brave men and the smiles of fair women, will convey you back to the periods when health moved in your step and beamed in your countenance; when curls hung gracefully beside the fair brow, and the beaux were around listening to your soft womanly voice, and looking admiringly at that face which all of us failed to convince you was more than ordinarily beautiful; when at Jackson, with old Clay in the room, you modestly sought retirement in the mazes of the dance, whilst uglier and more impudent women were turning up their painted cheeks, or their old lips, to be kissed by "the observed of all observers," who, though not very fastidious, doubtless had some *taste*; when the silvery tones of Mississippi's magic orator, S. S. Prentiss, the friend and admirer of "the Man of

the Age," distilled its melody into your ears, and rallied to his standard hosts of our countrymen.

Speaking of Clay and Prentiss brings me back to politics. Two weeks ago I wrote you I was doubtful whom I should vote for. Since then I have read and thought; and Fillmore has spoken. The result is that I shall not only "go for him, but go for him" enthusiastically. Tell M., if disposed to vote for Buchanan, not to commit himself till he sees or hears from me.

I will be in Wilmington in a week, where I hope to receive letters. I wrote you to start a letter for me to Raleigh, N. C., the 30th of this month; and to telegraph me there the 7th or 8th of next month. Direct to the care of H. and M. Kiss the children for me, and tell the servants "howdy."

Hoping that you are all well, I shall go cheerfully on.

Yours affectionately,

WILLIAM ATSON.

## LETTER XXXII.

Bashfulness.—Irritability.—Democracy.—Travels.—Clay.—Letter from home.—Children.—Sunday-School.—South Carolina.—Politics.—A Disunionist.—The Union.—Kansas.—Two strange sights.—Stage trip to Goldsboro.

FAYETTEVILLE, N. C., July 26, 18—.

MY DEAR WIFE:—Nothing astonishes me so much about myself, as the contrast between the caution and timidity with which I approach men, and the fiery boldness so easily aroused after the approach is made. Although I introduce myself *daily* to numbers, talk at the hotel and on the cars to ladies and gentlemen—saying pretty much what I please, and am almost universally treated well in return—I cannot *approach* them otherwise than with a cautious timidity. This I think imparts a gentleness to my manners, which is one cause of my being so well received. Forwardness engenders repulsiveness. Now I do not mean to say there is any apparent embarrassment or bashfulness about me. I want my children to understand, that bashfulness and modesty are two totally different things. A modest person may or may not be bashful; and a bashful person may be very immodest. To tell the naked truth, I dislike bashfulness exceedingly. It is disagreeable in



a ten year old child, and totally inexcusable in an intelligent or travelled man or woman. What I experience is doubtless not visible in my calm, nonchalant manners. It is merely an innate emotion, based upon the knowledge of the ease with which my feelings are wounded and my indignation excited; and the fear that my approach to yon stranger will strike him or her, as abrupt or inappropriate, and cause me a rebuff.

Of this foreboding I will never be able to divest myself. It does not decrease one particle. In fact I feel it more sensibly than when I first began this business, owing probably to the excitement caused by its novelty at the beginning. My wife will doubtless add, and "You will never cease manifesting your easily aroused indignation."

You are right, I presume. A manifestation of it just now, led me into this course of remark. I walked into the sitting-room of the hotel, and concluded, as the dining hour had nearly arrived, to sit there and look over the papers. A gentleman said, he understood Mississippi would vote for Fillmore. I replied pleasantly, and rather timidly, that I lived near the line, and could not think such a repudiating state would vote for so honest and so clever a man, but thought Tennessee would.

Several had something to say on the subject; and as none spoke but Democrats, I supposed all in the room worshipped the idol Democracy. One gentleman led the conversation in rather an overbearing dogmatic tone, and finally made a remark slanderous of Harry of the West. Feeling that I was a stranger alone in a strange place, and in a crowd of excited and bigoted politicians, I could not resist the impulse of my nature

to let my eye burn, and my voice assume the mild, compressed tone indicative of indignation and defiance, as I spoke of the venerable sage.

I soon found, however, that the crowd was on my side; and by the time I made this discovery, which would have rendered me good-humoured, forgiving, and harmless, the offender had decamped.

Since writing you from Cheraw, a few days ago, I have been to Bennettsville in S. C., Wadesboro, Rockingham, Wilmington, and this place—having travelled ninety miles on a little, lame, old, one-eyed, flea-bitten steed; one hundred and fifty miles in the cars; and one hundred and twenty by water, in small steamboats similar in size and construction to those summer boats horses pull up and down the bayous of Louisiana, when the Mississippi ceases to pour water into them.

At Wilmington I received your very interesting letter. Its cheerfulness did please, and would have delighted me, had it been recently written. It however lacked two days of being a month old. Notwithstanding its age, I read and re-read it. I was much gratified at your taking the children to the concert, and the picnic; not only on their account, but also on yours. Humanly considered, it seems a hard case that one so cheerfully disposed, so hopeful, so capable of enjoying the good things of earth, the interesting and the beautiful in Nature and in Art, should be so worn by the depressing influences of physical ailments.

Perhaps you have mistaken your case. May be you are labouring under a moral ailment. Brownlow, in his reply to

“The Iron Wheel” of Graves, says, a sister was received into the Baptist Church, upon the following experience :—

“I attended the preaching of Elder Riggs, afterwards suffered with distressing sick stomach, felt that I was a *sinner*, vomited freely, and gradually got better, feeling that my load of sin was removed.”

You have been attending the preaching of Elder Muggins, and if you can manage to vomit up your load, it may relieve you, and remove my uneasiness. The tenor of your last letter was so cheerful, and you had been flying around at such an unusual rate, for your stay-at-home-self, that I had a dim hope you had already done so, and was prepared for admission at least among “the Hard Sides.”

I am glad that you have taken the children to Sunday school, and hope you will be able to continue doing so. Does the sweet Anna learn anything? And how does the beautiful “Spectator” behave? Can she keep those active limbs still? Can she keep that little tongue silent? I can but heave a sigh to think that Anna is almost, and that Alice is too old to write about in this way. Give the little ladies a kiss for their distant father.

On entering the state of South Carolina I thought of the difference of her politics and mine, not simply the difference between a conservative Whig and a Tennessee Democrat, but the difference between a conservative Whig, and an excitable, fire-eating, ultra pro-slavery Calhoun Democrat, and I determined to be prudent, but firm and bold—bold as a freeman is in duty bound to be. This state is so one-sided that politics are rarely mentioned. Therefore, it was easy for me to escape

peacefully and honourably, but sometimes, by way of saying something, and feeling the pulse of the South Carolinian, I would introduce the subject. I was then hesitating who to vote for, but expressed my love and admiration for Fillmore.

At N. I became acquainted with the President of the Bank. He is one of those men, who believes what he does believe, and is not afraid to express his opinion. Well, he thinks, both for peace sake and as a matter of good policy, the Union should be dissolved; that the Conservative is the dangerous party, and that it would have been better for our country, if Clay, however good his intentions, had been hung before he became the author of a compromise, and if all such politicians as Fillmore had never been born; and so expressed himself. In earlier life I could not have endured these remarks, although the speaker might have previously treated me, as this one had, with that practical politeness which is so grateful to the stranger's heart. Now, however, I relished them.

I know a great many great men, as well as the people, almost unanimously believe the Union now shaking to its centre. But I have never had any *great* fear of its dissolution, since in 1847, I considered the politics of the Mississippi river, and its great northern branches. God, I have no doubt, started this great stream high in the North, and dug its channel through the South, and emptied into it the Missouri, the Ohio, and their and its smaller tributaries, because He *foresaw* the *Union*, and wished to cement it by making the northern, the stronger section, numerically and commercially, *dependent* upon the South, the weaker section in these particulars, for the main outlet for its commerce.



Not only has He done this, but He has also made this politically weaker section not only agriculturally, but, if she chooses to be so, commercially *independent*.

The South can literally live, and live comfortably *at home*. *The North cannot*. While patriotism and interest combine to induce the South to cling to the North, interest alone, even though she were utterly destitute of patriotism, would force the North to preserve *the Union*—and she has the power to do it.

Again, railroads have come, and are coming to the help of these streams. Their politics are the same. Both together will make us a condensed and *acquainted* community. This consummation is rapidly approaching, and when it arrives politicians will have to resort to other than sectional issues to stir up excitements, by which to get their names in the papers, or ride into office, and reap the spoils.

The Kansas difficulty is the last we will have to settle. If we annex Canada and the balance of the North of North America, the South will not be sufficiently silly to try to make slave states away up there, where she knows negro slavery cannot possibly exist. If we annex the southern portion of the continent abolition fuss will not prevent the darkies from going away down there; for the calculating Yankee neither desires civil war nor disunion, and who so fond of black slaves as the Northern abolitionist, when he moves to, or is interested in a region where their labour *pays*?

But will we adjust the Kansas difficulty? Certainly, I should not despair of an honourable adjustment even though Fremont were elected. The North, not the fussy, excitable,



fanatical, tend-to-other-people's-business North, not the treacherous, political, higher-law North, but the quiet, respectable, sensible, patriotic, commercial, tend-to-their-own business North, would not permit the South to be driven from the Union, *simply* because her politicians, mistaking the hubbub of ultraism for the voice of the people, were too cowardly to agree that, the Missouri compromise having been by them repealed, the bonâ fide inhabitants of the territory of Kansas will have a right to decide for themselves, whether they will have white or black slavery.

But Fremont cannot be elected. Certainly Buchanan and Fillmore together will get the vote of two or three states north of Mason & Dixon's line, and he will as certainly not get the vote of one south of it. If the election be thrown into the House, the South will undoubtedly unite on one of these two conservative men, and the Southern states, with the aid of only one Northern state, can elect the President. I had written to the last paragraph before I thought of the absurdity of what I was doing. Were you not aware that, like an Italian improvisatore, I have no more idea when beginning to write, of the details of what I will write, than the man in the moon? I should deem an apology due you for thus diverging into politics.

What I intended to say was merely this, that, in leaving N., I said to the president of the bank, "I have travelled so much that when asked if I have seen such and such a thing I frequently reply, I do not recollect, but presume I have. In your village, however, I have seen two things I never saw before. One is *that* Daguerrean gallery in a car on wagon

wheels out there in the square. The other is an open, avowed, unconditional Disunionist. And what is very singular, this Disunionist seems to be a very clever fellow." He smiled, and bade me an affectionate adieu, remarking that I would find a great many such as he in that state.

Now it was not singular that he was a clever man; nor would it surprise me to meet with a clever Abolitionist. These classes, or *rather this class, for they are the same genus, the only difference being in their geographical position*, are generally bold, honest, narrow-headed men, mistakingly trying to do what they believe to be right. They fight boldly, and fairly; and Conservatism knows how and where to meet them. *The men I despise are those, who have the same objects in view, but attempt to accomplish them by indirection and hypocrisy*, thereby deceiving the unsuspecting and leading them blindfold towards the vortex of disunion.

One reason why I dislike Democracy so much is, because she deliberately, for the sake of their votes and influence, invites these "villains of the baser sort" to her arms, nurses them in her bosom, and feeds them with the offices of the land they are endeavouring to rend in twain. Did the traitors, who convened at Nashville, lose their influence with Democracy? Did not this political Jesuit, in the last National Convention, while swearing fidelity to the South, receive the freesoil "Softs," of New York, with friendly grasp, and allow them to decide upon her candidate for the Presidency? Is she not now—but I am going again into a political tirade, and must for your sake stop.

30th. Finding I was on the last half of my second sheet,

not wishing to begin on another, as I would be certain to finish it, having just mailed you Clay's Life, being about to mail you Harper for August; and a week not having elapsed since I wrote to you, I determined to travel a little more before starting this on its long journey. I am now at Goldsboro, N. C., having passed through and stopped at Clinton, Warsaw, Kenansville, and Stricklandsville. This trip I have made mostly by stage.

The crops, so flourishing a few weeks ago, are being ruined by the want of rain. The thermometer, day before yesterday, was said to have risen to 104° in the shade; and the dust, the only thing, except chinchies, which makes me groan, follows and surrounds me like the atmosphere, when the stage or the car moves. It does not, however, take me long to get used to anything; and even this trouble has almost ceased to annoy me. I see but little fruit. The table is rarely burdened even with roasting ears. I see, by fancy, and the sight affords me pleasure, you, and especially the children, feasting now upon the corn-puddings; and then on water-melons and musk-melons and apples and peaches. I hope you are all sufficiently well to enjoy them. Kiss the brats, and tell them not to kill themselves eating. Their pa wants to see them once more. Remember me to M. I should not know but that he was dead, or had run off, had he not directed your last letter. Do not fail to tell the servants how much I think of them, and how grateful I am for their good conduct. You are "getting so well," I must begin to "take back" all those compliments I have been paying you.

Yours,

WILLIAM ATSON.

## LETTER XXXIII.

John Ramsay and woman.—His resemblance to a certain Congressman.—Two trips with ladies.—Reasons for not kissing one.—Meets with a handsome woman.—A sanguine man.—Georgia.—South Carolina.—North Carolina.—An unhappy negro.—Slavery.—A summary of my sight-seeings.—How a family should treat a quarrelsome member.

July 3, 1856, WELDON, N. C.

DEAR MOLLY :—I believe I had gotten back in my last to the Disunionist in N., S. C. After leaving there, I visited several villages, and finally arrived at Greenville ; where, as I before told you, I hired a driver and buggy to take me across the country.

My driver was a rich case. He had been everything in the lower walks of life, from pedlar to grog-shop-keeper. He had travelled everywhere, and seen everything. Though deficient in book education, his associations and travels had taught him a great deal ; and, being possessed of a sprightly and observant mind, and a glib tongue, he talked well, and talked all the time. Ten hours a day, for four days, did not exhaust his stock of small talk. It was plentiful and running over to the last. He was decidedly the most interesting and inexhaustible yarn-spinner I ever journeyed with. His yarns were never long or tedious. They were simply numerous.



His subject was almost invariably himself or woman. There was, however, no disagreeable egotism about him. He figured extensively and principally in every adventure—but this you discovered after the story was told. During its recital, the hero, with a natural skill, of which he was totally unaware, made his position appear subordinate.

In addition, he only lacked ease and polish in appearance and manners, to have caused him to be regarded by all as fine-looking. Unpolished country-girls would doubtless have considered him such. His black hair, dark eyes, fine complexion, and regular features would have justified their opinion. According to his own story, he could lead these captive at his will. He said he played finely on the fiddle; and, when everything else failed, he thought, with a fair chance, he could “cut out” any rival, and throw any lass into fits, by a resort to its thrilling tones.

I think he was good-hearted, according to the usual acceptance of that much wronged term; and honest, according to his ideas of honesty. This opinion, combined with the detailed circumstantiality of his yarns, led me to believe they were mainly true. His inferences from them, however, were such as I considered not only erroneous, but insulting to both the sexes; and you may rest assured that I good-humouredly roasted him.

While his thoughts ran upon woman and the Devil, mine oscillated from woman to God. His woman was an animal like himself: My woman was as pure and ethereal compared with myself, as an angel might be compared with her. He was as incapable of understanding or appreciating *the not unu-*



sual purity of a Lucretia, a Penelope, a Rebecca, as I would be of a just conception of a spirit effulgent with the radiance of heaven.

Such was John Ramsay. His condition is the legitimate result of his education. He has been educated by association and circumstances; and these were mostly unfavourable to his proper moral and mental development.

Similar to him are thousands whom I have met as equals, and whose associations and education have been apparently different from, and apparently superior to his. Weak wretches they are, whose intolerable vanity would prevent them from ever learning, that the woman who yields unlawfully to their peculiar attractions, is an exception to, and a stain upon, her sex; an unholy, unclean, God-forsaken reprobate, who will find anywhere other men equally vain and equally attractive.

I like Ramsay. I actually remember him with affection. He is not particularly to blame for his errors and faults. At least I am not the one to judge him. I think it highly probable that similar associations and influences would have made me much worse than he. The resemblance naturally between him and the Hon. R. T., both physically and mentally, was very striking. Look at the difference in the results. The one is a pure-minded, noble-hearted, Christian Congressman. The other is a hireling at a livery-stable, and, in other respects, such as I have described. In the sight of God, does T. deserve any more credit for being so good, than Ramsay does for being no worse? The response to the simple question, which has tried most faithfully to live according to the light within him, will decide their respective moral merits.

From Camden to Lancaster, a distance of thirty-eight miles, I travelled alone with Mrs. Greaves. She was a sweet and interesting woman—so sweet and interesting, that, fastidious as I am on that subject, I believe I would have been willing to have kissed her. I had, however, several reasons for not perpetrating this act:—1. I am such a good *husband*, I wouldn't even be guilty of the appearance of disloyalty to my sweet wife. 2. I was afraid the driver would see me and tell Greaves. 3. I didn't think Mrs. G. would let me.

You say I converse well, when I am talking of what I am thinking about. Well, I can assure you I thought of what I was saying when seated beside this lady. So, you may reasonably infer, that I made myself quite agreeable. Mrs. Greaves was not beautiful. She reminded me of Mrs. S., before association with "high fliers," and the success of her strong-minded husband, had somewhat crazed her weaker intellect, tainted her heart, vitiated her taste, and tinged with affectation her once plain and simple manners.

We, however, had to part; and men again became for a time my sole companions. The other day I took another stage-ride with a lady and her daughter. They were from Canada, and in favour of the English government. I took occasion to speak of the probable annexation, not only of the Canadas, but also of GREAT BRITAIN to the Union. The fact of their having attended a ball was mentioned. I very solemnly informed them, that at least three of the orthodox churches thought dancing a sin; and inquired if they were not afraid of going to "the bad place?" The little girl, about the age of Alice, was desperately opposed to slavery. I offered to bet

her she would soon be in love with a southern boy, and requested her to write to me when she married a slaveholder.

The mother seemed to enjoy my efforts to pique them into conversation; but, notwithstanding her calmness, and hints, the daughter could scarcely keep her temper. In this way we killed three hours, and mitigated the sufferings arising from the hot and dusty atmosphere.

At Kenansville I left them; where, forced to desert a drunken husband and father, they remained; the mother to see if she can make enough by millinery to support both, and educate the child. Which would you prefer, your present health and position, or uninterrupted good health, and be a wanderer from home and husband, seeking a support among strangers for yourself and little ones?

I had determined to write you that I was in as bad a fix as when, after roaming about Cincinnati for ten long days, without finding a pretty woman, I rushed to my boarding-house, and requested my friend H., from Memphis, to persuade his convalescing wife to dress up, and let me take a good look at her. But, just as despair was taking possession of my heart, a vision of beauty sat in the cars before me. She was a unique, a dashy-looking woman. One of those sort that ear-rings and fantastic arrangements of the hair become. She was rather above the medium height, and her form was finely proportioned. Her head sat like yours, upon a neck with a swan-like curve. Her hair was glossy and black; her eyes jet black and bright; her complexion a clear brunette. Her chin and nose indicated unconquerable firmness. Intelligence lit up the whole face. Her voice was soft and silvery. If this

woman could shrink into a modest, sensitive, timid-looking, but determined girl, she would be a fac simile of Alice E. If Alice could be exhilarated into a sparkling magnificence of expression and manner, she would be a fac simile of this woman. Fortune seated her directly facing me, and I drank in the effervescence, the champagne of her beauty for one glorious half hour.

As you may be tired hearing of the women, I will talk again about the men, though I would just as soon talk about alligators. A stranger from Georgia was commenting, as we journeyed in the cars, on the appearance of the South Carolina crops, and the poverty of her soil. I remarked that Georgia contained more poor land than any Southern state I had yet travelled through. He expressed great astonishment—said he lived not far from Savannah, where the planters “made” from seventy-five to one hundred bushels of corn, and sometimes *six hundred* bushels of sweet potatoes to the acre. I replied, that I had never been in his part of the state. This gentleman had a florid complexion, his hair was reddish, and his moustache and beard—he didn’t shave—were of the same colour. His appearance and *conversation* led me to the conclusion that his was the *sanguine* temperament.

The truth is, however, that the only mode of argument, by which South Carolina can sustain the position that she possesses the greatest proportionate quantity of fertile soil, is by assuming that Georgia got over the line from Augusta to Savannah, and pushed her sand and planted her pines all the way to Charleston. The maintenance of this assumption would relieve her of one-fourth, and the poorest portion, of her ter-



ritory. The other three-fourths, in which there is a contention between the pines and the oaks, first one and then the other predominating, is sufficiently poor, but I think the quality of its soil would compare favourably with that of its poor rival.

When conversing with the gentleman of the sanguine temperament, I was in, but had not travelled through, South Carolina. I have since done so, and am now fairly in the old North State, the land of tar and turpentine, of persimmons and herrings.

I was riding the other day in a buggy, with an old negro, from Clinton to Warsaw, and said to him, "Uncle, I live where there is no sand, no rocks, no pines." I could name nothing that would be so new to you as the idea of such a country was to him. "Master," said he, "I want to go thar."

Talking about this darkey, reminds me of being driven from Tarboro to Rocky Mound by an *unhappy* negro. This is a phenomenon you have probably never seen. The fellow was a shoemaker, and quite intelligent. I told him how much I had travelled, how conversant I was with all classes of people, and how I had learned from these travels, and this association, that happiness was in the heart, and resulted, not from external circumstances, but from a belief in God and earnest effort to do right, which belief and effort would produce contentment; how God had so wisely arranged it that each class could be as happy as the other, and how my experience led me to believe that if any one class was happier than the others it was the black class of the South. I then explained to him



how I could not now at my age be made a happy slave, and how, upon the same principle, it would be impossible for him to be a happy freeman.

I told him also how he had become unhappy—that he was a mechanic, and had opportunities to make money, and that I had observed, when a slave was allowed to contract the habit of making money, he generally became as miserable and as rascally as a white man; that he himself was half free, and a state of half freedom, unless regulated by proper principles, combined the disadvantages of both, adding the cares of freedom to the chains of slavery, and rendering these chains visible and galling. The different states of the Union, I said to him in illustration of this point, are like the different classes of people. Everything considered, they are about on a par. The country we are riding through is poor, so are Georgia and South Carolina, yet their inhabitants “get along” just as well as those of Louisiana, where the soil is fertile and inexhaustible.

The darkey argued well—as well as an Abolitionist could. He alluded to the separation of children and parents, husbands and wives. I admitted that unnecessary separations were wrong, and should be corrected by law, but defied him, from all the thousands of negro families he had known, to mention or think of ten cases of such separations. He admitted, that though he had belonged to three masters, two of them had treated him well. The other he had disliked before he was bought by him, and ran away without provocation, in order to force the latter to sell him. I called his attention to the miseries of the whites, the miserable loafers, the miserable husbands and wives he had known, &c., &c.

He finally began "to cave in," halfway acknowledged that he had been somewhat rascally, and at last concluded it was not slavery but his health, which had been delicate for some time, that caused his unhappiness. I hope my remarks let a ray of light into his head which will mitigate or dispel the gloom of his heart.

But, to bring this tiresome scroll to a close, I will condense my travels and sight-seeing into a few sentences.

I have been on revolutionary ground. I was at Charlotte, N. C., where our forefathers read and published the first Declaration of Independence, and where a part of the old house in which Cornwallis had his head-quarters still stands.

I have been to the lovely village of Camden, where, in front of a neat little church, a beautiful monument tells the passer-by of the brave De Kalb; and saw, a few miles distant, the hole in which, after the battle, the British buried their dead. I passed a dwelling-house, whose owner was so silly as to front it to the east, and then cut out an avenue exactly its width to the public road, that it might be seen therefrom. It was a hot morning, and he was getting his reward; for the sun poured his heated rays horizontally through all the front windows.

I have seen good corn and good cotton growing out of sand, shaded by the bare trunks of the murdered pines; and, within two weeks, heard planters grumbling at the rain and overflow, and then at the heat and drought.

I stayed in a town where it was said the chinchies could jump two feet, and that two fleas could turn a man over. The

chinch tale is rather fishy, but that about the fleas looks reasonable. Can Alice explain it?

I have seen families, who thought themselves genteel, allow dogs to stay in the house and hogs in the yard.

I have eaten some egg-pie. This pie is made by baking the unmixed, unadulterated eggs between pastry.

More remarkable still—now I am going to struggle up step by step to a Demosthenean climax—I have visited “a county seat” where no lawyer resided, and a village where there was no physician; have passed a lady who didn’t stare me out of countenance, and been *in a little city*\* whose inhabitants were not puffed up, and had some politeness.

This is a long letter, and yet I have expressed none of the thoughts which were uppermost—having written as you say I sometimes talk—and thus trifled over seven pages of foolscap, while my mind has been dwelling upon home and the weighty responsibilities connected therewith.

On my arrival here yesterday afternoon, I received letters from Smith & Co., Mrs. B. (the aunt who raised me), and yourself.

Smith’s was in reply to one from me. It was long and kind, but virtually declines my propositions, and thereby unsettles all my business plans.

I wrote my aunt, notwithstanding her unnatural conduct, quite an affectionate letter. Her reply has well nigh broken the last link between us, and almost extinguished the last pale hope of reconciliation that shivered at my heart. Do not dis-

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\* Wilmington.

cuss this matter, or anything connected with it, *with any one*, if you have any respect for me. The members of a family who abuse, *not* the abused members, are those who suffer in public estimation. I have done my duty; you have done yours. Neither has any cause to regret any portion of their conduct. I am your protector by law and affection; and I think I know how to protect you in this case, and have the firmness to do it.

Your ten pages of letters, directed and forwarded here, were a great treat, notwithstanding the depressing tendency of the other two.

Just after mailing my last letter, I stepped into the cars, and was greeted by Doctor B. I had not seen a Memphis man for six weeks, and the latest news from home was a month old. Have you never been sitting in a dark room, unconscious of depression or gloom, till the sudden sunlight exhilarated you? Such was the effect on me of the Doctor's appearance.

Kiss the children for me. How dear they become when the prospect darkens!

Yours, affectionately,

WILLIAM ATSON.

## LETTER XXXIV.

Danville.—Weldon.—Murfreesborough.—Doctor Hankins and his mixture.  
—Warrenton.—Henderson.—Raleigh.—Letters from home.—The author.  
—His talents.—His children, &c.—J., of Memphis.—Politics.

DANVILLE, August 17, 18—.

MY DEAR WIFE:—I arrived yesterday per stage in this flourishing, tobacco-manufacturing, hill-side village, and put up at “Williams’s Hotel.” I am now seated in a neat little cosy room. In front of my window is a landscape of high, oval hills, divided by ravines, and dotted with cabbage-gardens, corn-fields, houses, and green trees. Beneath it is a quietly flowing canal, a spring canopied by rocks, a rushing rivulet, and “Dan River’s” broad and shallow stream swiftly gliding over its rocky bottom. Almost in reach of me, is a long, covered bridge, and near each of its ends is a mill moved by water-power. The machinery of the mills at work, and the motion of these waters, together or alone, utter incessantly a musical dirge. Its effect upon one of my good spirits is very soothing, and very pleasant. To-day is Sunday. The mills have hushed their organ tones, and the milder music of the waters reminds me of “sweet Afton’s gentle lay.”

Two weeks ago I was in Weldon, indulging in the luxury



of writing to you. This last-named village is remarkable for being located in a comparatively rich section near the banks of old Roanoke, and at the crossing of sundry railroads; for having two fine hotels, at which an average of one hundred and fifty travellers per day take their meals; and yet remaining very small, without the prospect of enlarging or improving. In poorer sections, above and below, on the same road, wayside towns, through which the cars pass rapidly, barely allowing an occasional traveller time to get on or off, equal or excel it. Goldsboro, similarly situated, and created by similar circumstances, is vastly larger and promises continuous improvement. The speculators at "Junction City"\* had better study this exception to our railroad rules.

Since leaving Weldon, I have visited many towns in North Carolina, of which Murfreesboro, Roxabel, Warrenton, Henderson, Raleigh, Graham, Greensboro, Wentworth, and this place are the principal.

Murfreesboro I remember with pleasure, on account of the unusual politeness and sociability of its citizens, and as being the terminus of my trip—that is to say, the farthest point I expect to be from you and yours. Since leaving there, my course, like the star of empire, has been westward, *and homewards*.

The object of my visit to W. was mainly to see Doctor Hankins, an old and highly respectable physician, an amiable and honest man, who really believes that he has "hit upon" the *eleven* ingredients and mixed them in the *precise* propor-

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\* Now called Corinth.

tions to drive the monster "bowel complaint" from the land. He also thinks there is an immense fortune to be derived from the sale of his compound. So convinced is he of this fact, that he has retired from a lucrative practice, refused ten thousand dollars cash for a half interest in it, and designs converting his little property into money, and investing the whole in this enterprise.

His case excited my deepest sympathy. In less than two years, he will, in all probability, be a broken-spirited old man, with a helpless family on his hands.

I do not say this because I think there is not money in "The Bowel Mixture." In anything of this kind, *good* or *indifferent*, skilfully managed, and energetically and perseveringly urged, there is a chance for a fortune. But the men who carve fortunes out of such things, are not generally philanthropic enthusiasts, who believe in or care about the transcendent virtue of their panaceas. The very fact of believing this, indicates a want of hard, common sense, almost incompatible with success. The discoverer should either be a cold-blooded calculator, who cares comparatively little about the virtue of his medicine, so "*it takes*;" or he must find energetic agents of this sort, who will be faithful to him.

Doctor Hankins, though a Northerner by birth and education, is as simple and confiding as the Virginia-raised and Ginkins-cheated Seaton. It seems that the one-ideaism and blind enthusiasm, essential, at least for small discoveries and inventions, rarely, if ever, exist in unison with that calm considerateness, and power of cool, unbiassed calculation necessary to make the invention or discovery pay.

Another singular fact relating to these philanthropists is, that when they reach the moneyed part of their scheme, they are more greedy to grasp the dimes than the more habitual money-lover. And this hurry and greediness renders them crazy, reckless, and, consequently, incompetent to manage the very thing they have most at heart. They resemble a weak-nerved or weak-minded physician, who cannot, even while in his senses, prescribe for himself; or who, instead of rallying all his powers, grows faint-hearted and tremulous when his wife or child becomes sick, and wavers, and splits the difference between what he knows they need, and what some other doctor, who is unacquainted with their constitutions or habits, thinks they ought to take.

On Thursday, the 7th, the North Carolina elections for state officers took place. I travelled the most of this day, purposely in order to be quiet; but reached Warrenton in time to see a severe shillelah fight between Americans. This, and a battle with the bed-bugs, were the only circumstances calculated to impress this old town upon my memory, except a discovery connected therewith.

The gentlemen of a marriage-party, composed of grave M.D.'s, learned lawyers, honourable judges, had, a short time previously, spent a night at the same hotel; and not only uttered no complaint, but recommended it to me. On this point a *blooded* traveller has to be very guarded, and you know I belong to one of *the first families* of the Old Dominion; for a bed-bug will not bite "common stock." Therefore, they do not disturb one man or woman in ten. Therefore, they did not disturb the wedding-party. Therefore, I forgive the

gentlemen for fooling me into one of the bug-nests. For they neither made their families, nor themselves, *nor knew the difference in our blood.*

Henderson, or rather Aly's Hotel in Henderson, will ever be memorable as the scene of the great, and, I hope, final battle. At four in the morning I blew out my candle for the last time; the bed being stained with the blood, and the room filled with the odour of an hundred corpses. I wish the fellow who paints pictures for Harper could see me in one of these encounters. The picture would doubtless divert the ladies.

Raleigh is the oasis in which I reposed after the martial exploits of the two preceding nights. There also two more of your sweet letters met me; and a despatch, which, for the first time since my departure, told me "your family is *now* well."

One of the letters was the raciest you have ever written me. In it you speak of my transcendent talents—your fear that I am wasting them working for S.—and tell me of a certain talented editor, who told some one, who told you, that I was one of the most gifted men in the Union; and so courageous, that if he was a general, and desired a leader for a forlorn hope, he would instantly select me.

You are paying me off, are you, for writing so much about that once beautiful face of yours? Or have I inherited a large estate? and are you playing the same game Aaron did, when he said: "Miss Molly, I declare you are as pretty as you were when first married! Ain't Marse William got some old clothes you can give me?"

With regard to my courage, I admit it. It would be the



height of affectation and hypoeis for me, however scary about women and children, to pretend that I was much afraid of anything on my own account, *except chinses*. The only mystery about this matter is, that, from boyhood's hour up to the present moment, no one, either friend or stranger, has ever doubted or demanded proofs of my honour or courage. They all seem to take them for granted.

I do not remember that, in collecting, I have ever been called on for my authority to do so. I recollect telling the shrewd, energetic, money-loving Duncan, just after moving to the Goula, that I owned no property; that the negroes I controlled were not mine; that I was entirely dependent on my practice; didn't know that I would ever get a call; and if he sold me on a credit, he must do so with a full knowledge of these facts. He laughed at my persevering particularity, and insisted on my buying *ad libitum*. I recollect the difficulty with which Anderson, a prudent attorney, was induced to release me, and take two undoubtedly solvent names in place of mine, saying, though I was broke, he knew I would pay; and didn't like to exchange my name for that of anybody else.

I recollect, &c.—but scratch out the balance of the sentence, because it is too silly and egotistical to write so much about myself even to my wife. The thought that demanded expression was merely this. It is not singular that any one should be honest and courageous; but even admitting myself to be so, it has always struck me with astonishment, that everybody with whom I have had dealings, should seem, from their commencement, to believe this to be the case. Of this belief I



have had, not verbal, but *practical* demonstrations at every period of my life.

I have often pondered the parable of the talents. Under its influence, and the influence of a multitude of thoughts that prayed for utterance, as well as the applause of friends, who read or heard some of them uttered, I have often asked myself: Who am I? What was I made for? Am I burying my lord's money? Reflection has satisfied me that there is but one sensible answer to these queries. Whether I am peculiarly gifted or not *I do not know*; but *I do know* that it is my duty to support my family and pay my debts.

Till these things are accomplished, or become compatible with ambitious aspirations, vanity shall seduce me into no Borrioboola Gha enterprises. Till then, other men must have their names in the papers, and claim the honour of being church-builders and Union-savers. I will merely "drop in" privately the widow's mite.

I once thought this compatibility existed. When residing in the South, I permitted my name to be used as a candidate, and was beaten by an "old stager," by a small majority. Nothing ever gave me so much confidence in my ability to "get along" with the people as that race; and if anything could have tempted me to forsake family and honour, and plunge into the whirlpool of ambition, it would have been *that defeat*. Simultaneously with it, however, came the knowledge of the fact that I had been completely deceived in relation to my financial condition. Upon this discovery, without hesitation, without wavering, I bade adieu to fame, and, without a sigh, went to work. The only work I could get which would

pay certainly, and soon enough for my necessities, was that at which I am engaged. It is an humble business, and would be very revolting to the vanity of one who regarded appearance as preferable to reality; but it is an honest calling, and I pursue it cheerfully.

I was happy before my fall. I have been very happy since. I love to labour in the lowly vale, where tiny streams meander—where flowers bloom—where the gentle breezes blow—where character is secure—where friends are fond—where wife and children caress—where home is quiet. I pity the miserable wretches, who, driven on by an unholy, or an unquiet ambition, toil on the mountain side, or shiver in the bleak blasts that blow upon its summit. If ever I “climb the steep where fame’s proud temple shines afar,” Deity must open the way, and duty must lead or drive me up. Then the contentment that cools the heat of the vale, will temper the breezes that blow upon the mountain top.

I am writing thus just to be a-writing to you. I know that these conclusions at which I arrive through a sea of thought, you long since attained intuitively. I know you never have tried, and never will try to tempt me into the paths of vanity. I know that, accustomed to luxury, and capable of shining in society, you have cheerfully worked, economized, and shunned the world. I know, that however honest and however courageous the strong husband may be, the feeble wife is not less so.

Don’t you feel like shouting over the poverty that caused us to know, and esteem, and love each other thus? Don’t you feel grateful to it for the lovely traits it has exhibited in our children; and the assistance it has given us in educating

them? Could they have been so sweet, so unselfish, so industrious, so affectionate, reared in affluence, surrounded by nurses, waiting-maids, and company? How little Anna's message touched my soul! We are so accustomed to Alice's usefulness, it makes now only a slight impression; but to think of one so small as Anna, voluntarily cleaning knives and forks, picking raspberries and strawberries for market, and trying, in every way, to make her tiny self useful, is almost overpowering. It shows the omnipotence of precept and example, affection and firmness, combined. Was there ever a more helpless little human, when she was under her "aunt's" jurisdiction?

You speak of the importance of Alice going to school. *It is* about time for her to begin. I, however, regard book-learning as *a comparatively* unimportant part of a thorough education.

Those chaps have learned one lesson *already*, that many old D.D.'s, M.D.'s, and LL.D.'s die without learning—a lesson, for ignorance of which a knowledge of all the libraries in the world would not be a sufficient compensation. I mean the lesson contained in my serio-jocular expression: "Come, children, you have romped enough; I want you to go now and *play sewing*, or cleaning knives, or studying, or something of the sort." It consists in a practical knowledge; a realizing conviction of the fact, that play, too long continued, is not only unprofitable, but the hardest kind of work; that useful employment, cheerfully undertaken and pursued, is pleasant play; that he has the most "fun" who occupies his time most judiciously.

A year ago, Miss Anna could scarcely have been made to

clean knives and forks, or do any other work. She has not been forced, but led; or, rather, I might say, *amused* into such industry, that she doubtless annoys you with her sweet importunity to help about things beyond her capacity. As I almost wept when I required everybody to quit praising Alice to her face, so I almost weep now to think that Anna's day is over, and that for a few years the Queen of beauty must alone receive our homage.

One thing however reconciles me to this. The change is an important part of education. It teaches little brats several essential lessons. It gives them a fall in their own estimation, which does not hurt much at their age, but teaches them who they are, and will save them from greater falls when their bones have become more brittle. It teaches them also to love and listen, without envy, to the praises of another.

Alluding to the little Queen brings to mind a conversation, which occurred a week or two ago. I was waiting for the cars at a railroad station, when I overheard two North Carolinians bragging the one of a son, the other of his daughter. I poked my head in the window just as the latter said his child was the prettiest in the state, and remarked, "you can say *that*, as I live in Tennessee, but I have no idea the beauty of your little girl would do to compare with that of mine." He declared his could not be equalled. I told him mine was so beautiful that sometimes, when the vision of her beauty came suddenly upon me, I would fall, roll over, and shout with ecstasy. He replied that, under similar circumstances, he could scarcely resist the impulse to kneel and worship his. I then remarked: "If it be true that you have a pretty child, it



is very strange. For I have been in a great many families, and all the children I ever saw, except *my own*, struck me as being rather common."

After these jocose retorts, which highly amused ourselves and the bystanders, I asked the braggart to describe his daughter. He did so, and the description would have answered for Nellie. However similar the features, it is ridiculous, *you know*, to suppose the North Carolina gal's face to be illumined by the same electrifying radiance. I didn't tell the fellow this, for his vanity would doubtless have prevented his appreciating the remark.

You say S. is hopeful of the election of Fillmore, and desires me to indite an epistle for publication, that will be worthy of myself and the subject. I am not desirous of appearing before the public, and upon what he founds this hopefulness is difficult for me to perceive.—The late elections are all in favour of Democracy.

I do all I can honestly for Fillmore. Yesterday I persuaded an influential old line Whig, who was contracting the habit of portraying the probabilities of Buchanan's election, and arguing that the race was between him and Fremont, to promise that he would not talk on that side of the question for a month, because by so doing he would aid in producing the very result he dreaded. But, notwithstanding my efforts in Fillmore's behalf, my love of the man, my opposition to Democracy, I can but fear that it may become, on the part of a Southerner, an unpatriotic absurdity to vote for him. Had it not been for the American party he could easily have been overwhelmingly elected. But that party has rendered Whiggery help-



less, and has not, I fear, strength sufficient to conquer. Pratt, Pearce, Jones, old Whig Senators, have all, since I wrote about going for Fillmore, spoken in favour of Buchanan, thus aiding, by the influence of their names and position, in effecting what they profess to deplore ; that is, the inability of the former to rally the South to his standard. I shall do as I would have had them do. In my humble sphere I will talk and work for the man of my choice. When it becomes clear that he stands no chance, and voting for him is equivalent to voting for Fremont, then, and not till then, will it be time to turn to my second choice. Who knows what changes two months will produce in the political horizon ?

I do not, however, blame any one, for I never was so perplexed about what my duty, as a patriot, is. In the darkness I may blunder ; and, in this perilous crisis, every citizen should dread a blunder.

I may continue this subject in my next, as you seem interested in it, and writing is the best way, I ever tried, to clear away my own mental mists.

The noon of my trip is passed. More than two months have elapsed since I gave you all the parting kiss. It certainly will not be that long before I greet you with another of a more joyous kind. But make no calculations about my return till you hear from me at Lynchburg. Kiss the children.

Yours,

WILLIAM ATSON.

## LETTER XXXV.

Engine off the track.—Scary persons.—Politeness of white women and “blacks” contrasted.—Lynchburg.—Kisses strange women.—Life insurance.

LYNCHBURG, Va., August 21, 1856.

DEAR MOLLY :—Yesterday, as we were rattling along “the banks and braes” of old James river, and had begun almost to snuff the scent of a Lynchburg dinner, a cow jumped out of the bushes on the road. “The catcher” struck, and instead of knocking her off, knocked her down, and pushed her with its grinding power fully an hundred yards along the track, when the jellied mass rolled over on one side, and the engine on the other.

We were detained about two hours. The detention interfered with every one else. The other passengers were hurrying to the Springs,—I designed stopping. The amusement afforded by the appearance of the affrighted, and the sociable conversations to which it led, amply repaid me for the annoyance of so short a delay. One elderly lady seemed to take a particular fancy to me. She would talk to me. I liked her honest face, and knew she was scary only from erroneous notions. So I talked to her seriously and jocosely; first

speaking of Providence, and when this failed to cheer, telling her I was afraid she had been doing something wrong; that I never could understand how anybody with a good conscience could be scary; that the ladies all seemed to be morally better than myself, but that when I saw them so afraid, I was disposed to suspect they had committed some horrible sin. The serio-comic way in which I said this, seemed to divert; and somewhat relieved her. She had a daughter about Alice's age, who was distressingly alarmed when the cars started again. I told her how particular I was to see that my little girls were not cowards; how I educated them into a quiet and unobtrusive bravery.

A gentleman, six feet high, of vigorous and healthy frame, said his nervous system was so completely shattered by the alarm, past and prospective, that he would take a deep drink then, and repeat till its tone was restored. He invited me to join him. I replied "Not any, I don't reckon I have any nervous system. At least, it doesn't need liquor." Thus we talked and laughed the hours away—the smell of raw beef the meanwhile regaling our olfactories.

The train which came out for us was not sufficiently large to seat the white passengers. They had also to occupy the seats of the darkies, in "the second-class" car. I gave my first seat to a lady, and soon succeeded in getting another. Upon looking around I saw a stout and healthy, but gray-haired mulatto woman standing up. I told the gentleman by me, if he had no objection to the old lady's sitting by him, I would give her my seat. He did not object. I beckoned to her. She came forward and took the seat without even

*thanking me.* Such impoliteness by a white woman would not have surprised me. It is a rare thing to meet with one of them, who repays an act of disinterested courtesy with a smile. They seize a gentleman's property, or accept his efforts to serve them, as though they had a right to demand them. I admit they have this right, according to every rule of Christian chivalry, but that is the very reason, ordinary magnanimity, the most common-place delicacy of feeling, or refinement of manners should teach them the beauty of waiving their rights, or gratefully and gracefully receiving their dues. How subjects love, and how freely they give to a queen, who requires but little! How grudgingly they obey a sovereign, who constantly reminds them of his sovereignty!

But, I was going to say, such an impolite act by a genteel black woman did surprise me. I am inclined to believe it was merely the result of forgetfulness. I am glad to think her conduct was an exception, and that nine-tenths of the blacks, cornfield hands included, would under similar circumstances manifest more politeness. For they are a kind-hearted race, and kind-heartedness almost always begets politeness.

On my arrival here I received yours of the 9th instant, and was distressed to hear of Alice's second attack. I attribute both to those long walks.

The publication, in *The Sentinel*, that my "distinguished" self had declared in favour of Fillmore, annoyed me somewhat. In another part of this, or in a subsequent letter, I will tell you why.

Yesterday evening, and the greater part of to-day, I was engaged in writing to S., occasionally refreshing myself by



reading a few pages of *next* month's Harper. This afternoon, an hour or two "be sun," I strolled down Main street, turned up the hill beyond the business streets, went to the door of a respectable-looking private house, rang the bell, walked in, and kissed three ladies—a wife, a daughter, and a niece;—the husband, father, and uncle looking quietly on and scarcely saying a word. There is, I can tell you, nothing like cool impudence. What is more remarkable, the ladies responded unabashed and cordially to my salutations.

You will say, "Oh yes, they were relations." I tell you candidly, except G., an Orleans gentleman, I met at "The Norvell House," I did not know a human face in Lynchburg. You see, I hadn't kissed a woman for more than two months, and couldn't stand it any longer. You will take it for granted, as a matter of course, that they were good-looking. To kiss an ugly woman would, you know, be too much for my stomach.

I expected to find a letter from Smith & Co. awaiting me here. It did not arrive till to-day. I looked for it with anxiety, because it was to decide the direction of my journey. Until it had been perused I could not calculate about the period when I should kiss *familiar* lips. I thought I might have to visit New York; I am ordered to Americus, Georgia.

On Monday I expect to start to this place. This dip into the South at this season will cost me something. You must pay the required premium on my life insurance. You can say, I will not be south of Memphis latitude over twenty or thirty days. Do not neglect this. I am aware that you and all other good wives have a repugnance to insuring their husbands' lives; but you must think of the children. The idea



of leaving you and them in an embarrassed pecuniary condition almost makes me feel cowardly. The life insurance relieves the tendency to this feeling. It affords to the poverty-stricken husband and father a peace, "which the world can neither give nor take away." Do not look for me before the 1st of October. I did not tell you so, but I left home with the deliberate determination of not returning prior to the 20th of September. The loss of time before leaving was not my fault, but I was receiving pay, and desired to make up for it. Write immediately to Americus, Geo. Do not be uneasy about my Southern tour. Remember how long I have lived in a more southern latitude, and think how soon I will be at home.

Unless a want of time prevents, I will write again in a few days. Kiss the children for me, and remember me to the servants. That is, if you still regard as your liege lord, one who walks into strange houses and kisses strange women.

Till notified to the contrary,

Yours ever,

WILLIAM ATSON.

## LETTER XXXVI.

Author's childhood.—Lynchburg.—Love of our birth-place.—Wise, Jefferson, Washington.—Comparison of states.—The philosophy of contentment.—The philosopher's stone.—“Penning men.”—A.'s ambition.—Political explanation.—Whig and Democratic parties.—Slavery.—Abolition.—“Mammy.”

LYNCHBURG, August 23, 1856.

DEAR MOLLY :—I am now in the heart of my native state. Thirty-eight years ago, or thereabouts, away off in old Dinwiddie, I startled the bystanders with my first cry. Thirty-three or four years ago, in this very town, I prattled (that's funny, isn't it? just think of my prattling); and wore girl's clothes, and declared “I won't say Peter Flewallan a bit;” and delighted, with my sweet childish ways, (that's funnier still—my sweet ways, ha! ha! ha!) Father, and Mother, and Mammy. The old house, I used to act so remarkably in, still stands up yonder on the hill. In it Mary lisped, and Annie was born.

Here I learned my A. B. C.'s. Here I first went to school, first and last played truant, caught the first glimpse of the meanness, and misery, and folly of doing wrong, and imbibed my still existing prejudices against “mixed schools.” I do not know her name, I have never heard of her since, but the

image of the little innocent, curly-headed, five or six year old girl, who instilled these prejudices into the little boy of the same age, has never been forgotten.

About twenty-nine years ago I passed through this town, on a return trip from Amelia to Tennessee, and "cut up some extras" in the street, on account of which, three or four weeks afterwards, Pa *gave* me one of his *kind*, AFFECTIONATE whippings. Long as was the delay, it was not unexpected. He had quietly promised it, and though it had been postponed a year I should still have calculated upon "*the present.*" If you want a child *to love*, and *never forget you*, three weeks after the offence is committed, and punishment promised, take him away off to a private place, keep the transaction profoundly secret, and whip him AFFECTIONATELY.

About this period I saw for the last time, till now, the matron whom I kissed so cordially the other day. It was Mrs. S., the wife of a distinguished D. D. She is a cousin I have been always taught to respect and love. The young ladies alluded to were not then born. Am I not getting old? Were it not for the immortality of mind and soul I should begin to think so. But health, and faith, and gratitude are wonderful rejuvenators. I feel young and happy, as happy as when I used to toddle up and down this hill. My early cries were my last. As age begins to root the hair from my forehead, and make crow-tracks beneath my eyes, a maturer, a wiser happiness blooms in my heart. I have bid farewell to tears, save those of affection, sympathy, and joy. My prospects, regarded with infidel eyes, would now look very gloomy,

but the dark cloud is evanescent, and the sunlight endureth for ever.

I had no idea reminiscences of so early a childhood would thus revive in the once familiar scenes. As soon as I reached here, I felt that this had been my home. I was directed the way to Uncle I.'s house—in early days I called all the preachers uncle; I could not previously have told you anything about his dwelling. So soon, however, as I saw it, its position and aspect were as familiar to me as your loved face.

The hill, on the side of which Lynchburg reposes, is almost a mountain. The city extends from the river to its top. Each cross street is level, so that when you reach the first, second, or third you imagine yourself at the climax, but ask where any one resides, and you will, according to my experience, be told, "Oh, he lives up yonder on the hill." The ten thousand inhabitants that live, move, and climb on its side can look down on James river, or across at the picturesque beauty of the twin hill-mountain, that rises precipitously from the opposite bank. I see now, through my window at "The Norvell House," the streets and houses of the city, the yellow water of the river, and the jagged sides and oval summit of the opposite hill, ornamented with cedar, pine, and chestnut bushes growing amid the rocks. Two or three houses rest upon it, and two white cows are in sight, browsing among the green bushes upon its barren declivity.

*We will love our birth-place.* Reared as I have been in Tennessee, it is strange with what a spell and a power the love of "old Virginny" moves my heart. Whence does the emotion arise? Is it the bud of our first perception of parental



kindness? Is it the lingering impress of the joyous ride upon the father's foot, or the shadowy remembrance of the mother's countenance, as it watched o'er us in the days of our helplessness? Is it the product of the parents' fireside talks about the land they left? Or do I love old Virginia, as everybody else does, not because she is my mother, but because she was the mother of states and heroes, because little Tommy Jefferson, Jimmy Madison, Jim Monroe, and Pat Henry waded barefooted in her streams, and romped over her hills; because a brave boy that wove his name out of her flowers, and wouldn't tell his father a lie, became *the peerless* man, immortalizing her history, and illumining her scenery, with the effulgence of his own transcendent fame.

By-the-bye, Wise has recently made a brilliantly eloquent speech on George Washington, apparently laudatory, but really defamatory of his character. He is so afraid the greatest of men will be considered "a myth" by posterity, that he quits the beaten track of history, and resorts to anecdotes, bearing the indelible stamp of falsehood, to prove him imperfect. The fool didn't possess originality sufficient to conceive the idea, that man can be perfect as well as a cow, a horse, an elephant; that animal perfection, God perfection, angelic, and *human* perfection are *four* distinct things. "Ebo-shin and gizzard foot" knew that with mankind imperfection *was the rule*, and had not the capacity to comprehend that wondrous equilibrium of vast physical, mental, and moral powers, the possession of which resulted in the production, and electrified the eighteenth century by the exhibition, of a *gigantic exception*. There may have been other perfect men. The



Bible intimates that Samuel was of this class. Cyrus resembles one. There may have been others, unknown to fame. Of these we cannot speak positively. Washington's character, private and public, is however known from his birth to his death; and I would fearlessly defy the world to establish by means of reliable history an imperfection therein. *He was a perfect man.*

The fact is, his conservatism stands like a wall of adamant in the path of ultra-democracy, and some of its restless, ambitious, miserable leaders desire, I fear, to lessen the magic influence of his name; to drag him down to the level of Tom Jefferson. I say nothing against the latter. He was a great man, and his love of truth would cause him to despise the effort of his pretended friends to do such despicable deeds. He would know too that everything is estimated by comparison, and consequently if *the large* does not wish to appear *little*, it should not be placed contiguous to the GIGANTIC.

I am, however, travelling from the subject. I met, a few days since, with a striking illustration of love of the native place, with unconsciousness of its existence, in the person of Mr. Matthewson. He is a native of North Carolina, but removed long since to Tennessee—professes great attachment to the latter state, and denies that he cares a farthing for the former. He is also a wool-dyed Locofoco. I tried an experiment upon him.

If you have watched my movements with the interest with which a loving wife should watch the wanderings of her absent lord, you will have perceived that my course through the eastern three-fourths of North Carolina described a zigzag

circle, the only incomplete part of the circle being the short space between Salisbury and Greensboro. This course of travel gave me a fine opportunity of seeing a great portion of the country.

When I first entered the state, I was agreeably disappointed: the land was better than I anticipated; the corn, under the influence of sunlight and showers, promised an abundant harvest. My exit from it was also calculated to impress me more favourably. The truth is, its middle portion resembles somewhat West Tennessee. Oak timber and hills constitute, however, the main resemblance. Our land is always fertile, when fresh. There is nothing we call "soil" upon the uncleared land here. It was *born* poor. I never thought, I never heard any one say, our section was pretty. The region I am now describing is not prettier, but it is exquisitely beautiful compared with the eastern balance of the state. This is poor, and hopelessly ugly. There may be, and are, exceptions. Roanoke and Tar river bottoms are said to be very fertile. Along the Cape Fear there are some rich lands and pretty scenery. Raleigh is quite a handsome village. So are Murfreesboro and some others. But if the tourist were required to describe, in *two* words, the aspect of this entire section, and the character of its soil, those two words would be *poor* and *ugly*. The piney country in Georgia and South Carolina is usually undulating or hilly, and sometimes picturesque. Here it is generally a lifeless, unbroken level.

A blind man could tell when he had reached the poorest part of this poor region. He would hear but one voice, and that would be the voice of Democracy. It is said, when the

pinces are deadened, or cut down, oaks grow in their stead. This suggests the queries, whether turpentine will not eventually "give out;" and, if so, can Democracy survive it? If good schoolmasters build their houses amid the young oaks, the probability is, that whatever may be the former's fate, the latter will certainly cease to predominate. The water of this region is not good, and, judging by its appearance, the number of physicians and druggists, the amount of their practice and business, I do not believe it healthier than in the thickly settled and long-cleared portions of the West. Again, the climate, though in the same latitude, is as cold as two or three degrees directly north of us.

A gentleman, who was raised near Concord, N. C., farmed nine years near Memphis, and moved back. He told me that West Tennesseans habitually planted corn one month earlier than it could be safely planted by the people of his neighbourhood; and that, in the cultivation and picking of cotton, the former had at least two months the advantage. On the poor lands of Georgia and South Carolina the farmer makes as much to the hand as does the West Tennessean. This is owing to the more genial climate, and the lightness of the soil, which enables him to cultivate so much more land with the same force. North Carolina is the only state which acknowledges she makes less. With six or eight dollars' worth of guano and other manure scattered over an acre, it averages fifteen or twenty bushels of corn and twelve or fifteen bushels of wheat, the very same average our poor, worn, old fields produce without manure.

Mr. Philips told me in the West his average crop *to the*

*hand* was five bales of cotton; and, I suppose, from my knowledge of the country, seventy-five to a hundred bushels of corn. Where he now resides, his average crop is two bales of cotton and fifty bushels of corn to the hand. Tobacco is grown in the northern counties. Of this crop I know nothing. The county of Caswell is said to produce the finest tobacco in the world. Whether Virginia would admit this to be true, I cannot say.

After this description, you will be ready to say, "Georgia stock is rising; North Carolina must be inferior." Ah, but I won't take back, because you would tell Mrs. G., and she would laugh at, and turn me over to the tender mercies of Mr. B., who "riz" out of the sands of Edgecombe. Again, I have not yet visited the western part of the latter state; and "*they say*" the *scenery* is beautiful, and the land richer there.

You will doubtless be inclined to ask, Can people live in North Carolina? I could not have made my tour at a more favourable time for answering this question negatively. There was universal lamentation. The drought had blasted one-half of the corn, and injured materially the cotton crop. The chince-bug, an insect resembling somewhat an ant, but having dark wings with a white spot on each, and emitting, when mashed, the odour of the bed-bug, had rallied in myriads to the aid of the drought, and was feeding on the growing crop.

Hard winds followed, and blew down or twisted round the parched stalks, whose roots were already weakened by the biting bugs. To cap the climax, just as I departed I heard that the judgment of hail had descended and bored holes in the tobacco leaves of many once hopeful planters.



Notwithstanding these gloomy facts, people do live in North Carolina; and there are no indications of a stampede. Not only so. People not only live there, but they live well, as well as they do anywhere. Not only so. The merchants of this state, as well as those of South Carolina, are dependent upon the mass of the people, who are mainly tillers of this poor soil; and yet they rank higher on the New York record, for solvency and promptness, than those of any other southern states, except the poor one in which I am now writing.

A description of Louisiana might be truthful and yet charming. The absence of winter, the cool sea-breeze, its rolling river, its navigable bayous, its contiguity to market, its alluvial, fertile, and everlasting soil, its rich prairies, its forests of evergreens, its ever-during flowers, its cotton and sugar cane, its figs, oranges, and bridal orange-blossoms; "the coast," dotted with villages, country mansions, and cottages, and on its southern border the Gulf's eternal roar, combine to make a musical picture, or rather to constitute a lovely reality that turns Fancy's eye towards Paradise, when Eve trimmed its luxuriant shrubbery, and bathed in its pellucid streams.

Now daub West Tennessee with any amount of paint, and how comparatively uninviting would be its portrait! Yet we have tried both, and prefer the latter. And now that I have examined nearly the whole Union, I am satisfied with it. The fact that I was raised there, that its people are my friends, that I love them all, has doubtless something to do with my estimate of it; but I believe, laying all feeling of affection aside, I could demonstrate, by fair argument, that its advantages counterbalance its disadvantages so completely as to



render it equal to any other section of this ocean-bound republic.

It would be an exaggeration to say that the planters of Louisiana—high-toned, whole-souled, chivalrous gentlemen—with their vast incomes, belonged to the commission merchants of Orleans, that these merchants belonged to the banks, and that the banks were insolvent. The latter clause would be totally untrue. But it is true that the planters of Tennessee, with their little incomes, are almost universally prosperous and independent, whilst those of Louisiana are too frequently manacled by mortgages, and worry out their lives trying to *free* themselves. It is also true that the prosperity of the one state is more apparent than real, and that of the other more real than apparent. It is no less true that mosquitoes swarm in Louisiana, and that epidemics have become almost endemic there.

When, after several years' residence on the black, deep soil of this state, I visited the scenes of my younger days, the region where I used to mix with the Indians, shoot the birds, and chase the rabbit and the deer, on my way to the town in which I "made love" to you, I remarked, as the stage rushed past the poor old fields, "Had I not been raised in this section, it would require strong evidence to convince me that man could live and flourish here." This observation was evoked by its comparatively desolate and barren appearance. Georgia, South, and especially North Carolina, appear to me as poor, compared with West Tennessee and North Mississippi, as these do contrasted with Louisiana. With us "bottom" is a synonym for fertility. The only question to be asked is, does

it overflow? In the former states the terms are by no means synonymous. Pines and sand, with an obstinacy worthy of a better cause, press forward, and take position on the banks of their murmuring streams.

Yet, notwithstanding my criticism of this trio of states, and my high estimate of that in which we live, paradoxical as it may appear, I am not prepared to assert that the former are inferior to the latter.

Experience, observation, and calm reflection, incline me to the conclusion that all large sections of our earth, at least of that portion included within the temperate zone, are, everything considered, about equal.

The same judgment, honesty, energy, and perseverance which would insure success in the one, would generally be rewarded to the same extent in any of the others.

The following rule, on the subject of "moving," would seem to be the corollary to the foregoing conclusion:—"Remain where you are, unless the propriety of moving is *self-evident*. If there be a doubt, give *home* the benefit of it."

I have been thus tedious, because I dislike to do anything animate or inanimate injustice, even in my own heart; and I was fearful I had done, or might do, these sister stars in our glorious Confederacy some unintentional wrong. They are my country; and I should regard myself as a traitor if I did not love every foot of it from Maine to Florida, from the Atlantic's western verge to the Pacific's eastern shore.

Loving it thus, I can still inquire, who dare assert that these southern states are not naturally equal to New England's sterile soil and icy clime? Who dare affirm that the people,

black and white, are not as good and as happy as those who shiver month after month in the fertile prairies of Illinois, or the snow-clad hills of Ohio?

I say but little of the people. They are human, and humanity is the same everywhere, only modified by minor differences in organization, surrounding circumstances, and education. I know that these differences sometimes produce rascals. I have occasionally met with these abortions, and suffered by the collision. But I am satisfied that eight-tenths of mankind, civilized and savage, *desire* and *design* to do right, according to their notions of right. I am satisfied that there is more weakness than wilful wickedness in the world. Harsh judges, or ignorant, or inexperienced, or unreflecting censors of their race, say this is a mistake. My conclusion, properly understood, is not incompatible with the greatest caution in business transactions, and is a very pleasant one, begetting in the heart love, and joy, and charity. Theirs leads to self-conceit; and its legitimate children are bigotry, bitterness, and malice. *They look away from themselves, and fix their attention on the exceptions. I study the rule, and myself.*

At any rate, ninety-nine hundredths of those I have met North and South, have treated me well—as well as I think I deserve to be treated. And you know that I am as sensitive as a touch-me-not, and that a streak of lightning can't start even with, and beat in speed the electric flash of my wrath, if I think a wrong or an insult is *intended*.

*The philosophy of intention is the philosopher's stone.* I have found it; and it makes me love God and my neighbours. Don't you reckon I am a Christian? I sometimes hope so.

I cannot speak positively, but I think there is a difference between our society and that of the old states. The classes in the latter are more distinctly marked. There is a wider gulf between the higher and the lower. With us, white men, except candidates for the penitentiary, stand generally on a par. These are the legitimate results of the fact that the poor and more enterprising more generally migrate to new countries, leaving the wealthy and the lazy poor behind.

Now I think it would be very difficult to find a man in Tennessee who could be "*penned*." In North Carolina this feat is sometimes performed. "Penning" a man, consists in seducing him into a room several days before an election, and locking him up; or having him watched, and feeding him on the best fare, and gorging him with liquor and promises, till the hour for voting arrives, then marching him to the ballot-box, and seeing that he votes right—that is on the side of his seducer, jailer, food and liquor furnisher. I could scarcely be made to believe in such degradation, and it is doubtless very rare. But that there are occasional instances of it, was repeatedly asserted by respectable residents.

For the party who is "penned," great contempt is felt. But is not the enlightened citizen, who would debase an ignorant fellow-man, the most contemptible of the two? All such enormities—and evils beset the ballot-box everywhere—grow out of the crime of betting on elections.

The numerous mistakes, in the preceding paragraph, were caused by a conversation between two men in front of the hotel, which, by a singular coincidence, commenced and waxed furious just as I finished the expression of my views relative to



human nature. Their subject was the same. They swore they knew all about it. They "damned" it, and called on God to "damn" them if it was not a rascal, a cold-blooded, selfish, unfriendly rascal, that would do nothing from a good motive, that did everything for pay. *One of these men was a negro trader. Both were drunkards.*

Well, you have forgotten all about Matthewson, haven't you? I, however, have not. Think over what I have written, and select from the mass all the materials for a satirical disquisition on North Carolina and Democracy. Imagine me in a good humour, and in the humour for talking—in the mood precisely suited to pushing good-natured satire to the extreme limit of propriety, and you will have a pretty correct idea of what I said to him. He didn't mind my comments on Loco-focoism, for the very reason that I pitched into it with such a venom. He knew it was strong, and spreading itself like a green bay-tree. But, good heavens! how he writhed; how his blood boiled under my strictures upon his native state!

When his wrath became as palpable as though he had an ugly and silly sister, and some one had unnecessarily told him so, I said to him, "You told me you had no affection for your *native* state; and here you are as mad as fire at a criticism upon it, the truth of which you cannot deny. Don't you realize now the reason why 'Americans' think *natives* more trustworthy citizens than the *foreign-born*?" I did not tell him so, but the blunders that ruined this party were secret oaths, avowing in their platform opposition to a religious sect, and including in their proposed restrictions foreigners already naturalized. Ex post facto rules are always unjust, and a



judicious change in the naturalization laws would have effected all its professed objects. This brings me back to politics. My ambition aspires after the following things, in the following order:—

1st. To maintain upon just grounds my own good opinion of myself. 2d. To retain my wife's. 3d. My children's. 4th. My friends'. 5th. The public's good opinion of me.

My respect for my own good opinion of myself being highest on the list, would cause me to try to do what I believed to be my duty to my family, my country, and my God, though its performance should deprive me of the esteem of all the others.

My respect for the good opinion of my friends and the public induced me to address a letter to I., explaining my political position.

My respect for my wife, combined with the inclination to occupy my time in writing to her, induces me to enter into a little private explanation.

When I wrote you, I had determined to go for Fillmore. I was in South Carolina, and had just read his recent speeches. Public opinion in this state had no effect upon me. It is uniformly one-sided, and wrong-sided. Judging the "old line" Whigs by myself, and the reports in the papers, I supposed that they would likewise read their favourite's speeches, and rally to his trumpet call. Under the influence of this impression, and the belief that *I had all the light necessary for a patriotic decision, I decided.*

Afterwards I travelled through North Carolina, where a desperate battle was being fought between "the American" and Fillmore candidates for Governor and other offices and the

Buchanan men, the election of the former depending, as Fillmore's success does everywhere, upon the Whigs, who hold the balance of power.

Before I wrote on the subject again, and finally, the American candidates had been defeated by greatly increased majorities—Gilmore being beaten by thirteen thousand. The elections in Arkansas, Kentucky, and Missouri, were reported to be unfavourable—Jones, Pearce, Pratt, three Whig senators, as well as Choate the mighty orator, had declared for Buchanan; and what was still more dispiriting, the private Whigs in North Carolina and Virginia were either going for him, or *wavering*.

The apparent hopelessness of Fillmore's prospects *depressed* me into a state of *indecision*.

Will you reply: "I thought you did not go by others; and the weaker a good cause, the more tenaciously you adhered to it." Such a remark would show that you did not understand the cause of my fickleness. If Henry Clay and General Jackson were to rise from the dead, and run for the presidency, I would vote for the former though every man in Tennessee should hiss me as I walked to the polls. If Mr. Fillmore was running alone against Mr. Buchanan, I would do the same thing for him. Again; if the power was delegated to me of appointing the President in this eventful crisis, I should not hesitate a moment. Without consultation, opposed or unopposed, I should appoint Fillmore. He is my first choice among the living.

But the condition of parties is perfectly anomalous. There are three candidates. Two are national—one is sectional. The

paramount duty of the patriot is, to exert all his power to defeat the latter. The Union is safe in the hands of either of the others. How to effect this defeat, is the question. *What ought to be done*, is plain as the meridian sun in the blue and cloudless sky. *How to do it*, is a problem that puzzles the brains of all but one-eyed partisans.

Take Fillmore or Buchanan off the track, and Fremont might be elected. Divide the South between the two former, and neither of them can be elected by the people. Whichever is the weakest in the South, ought probably to be "dropped" here. This would be clear, were it not probable that the strong man at the South would be "dropped" by the North; thus making the race purely sectional, and thereby increasing Fremont's chances. From these remarks you will, I think, perceive that the success either of Fillmore or Buchanan is the great desideratum, and whether either, or which had better be withdrawn, are important questions. To reply to them conscientiously, is exceedingly difficult. I think I have assumed in my letter to J., which you will see, the correct position.

I am studying the risk "of throwing the election into the House." My impression now is, but I may change, that if I conclude this risk will be too great, I shall vote for Buchanan; if not, for Fillmore.

You may inquire, Why this extreme caution about voting, if the Union be not in danger of dissolution? Did Conservatives know how to act, there would be none. As it is, there is danger. Compared with others I am not much alarmed, and still have great faith in its perpetuity. I think still, as I told you previously, that the Deity has bound it together by the

strongest natural ties. But fanaticism and treachery may sever them. I do not forget that similar ties bind parent and child together, and yet there are parricides and infanticides.

You must also keep in mind the immense difference between the Black Republican and Democratic parties. One is composed of fanatics and traitors trying to destroy, the other mainly of patriots struggling to preserve and magnify the Union.

I take especial pleasure, during this the day of its power, in rasping, ridiculing, satirizing Democracy, and joking Democrats almost to the fighting point. I really dislike many of its spoils-seeking, Janus-faced secession, free-soil, flattering-foreigners, Jesuitical leaders; and dread the readiness with which the drilled masses march to the music of their orders. But I am convinced that two national parties are essential to the prosperity of every country; and that no two were ever better adapted to attain results pleasing to the American patriot, than the old Whig and Democratic parties. Out of their antagonism this Republic has grown to be among the nations, what its founder was among men—a peerless giant.

If mankind were as stupid about learning arithmetic as they are in comprehending the simplest principles in medicine, divinity, law, politics, not more than one in a thousand could ever be taught to understand how two and two make four. Is it not astonishing how much sprightliness, and vigour of mind; how much fluency and power of expression; how much ability to weave real or apparent facts into a plausible, but illogical and deceptive argument, can be exhibited by a person utterly destitute of common sense, utterly incapable of



reasoning logically, or of comprehending logical reasoning? Is it not heart-rending to think that our country is menaced with dissolution and fraternal war, simply because men cannot understand—though they are written in the history of every people, and *stare* them in the face at home—the simple facts that God has so organized society, that hewers of wood and drawers of water are essential to its existence; and that these hewers of wood and drawers of water have opportunities to be good and happy, according to their capacity, equal with those for whom the wood is hewn and the water drawn?

Not comprehending these plain propositions, Northern fanatics will not even inquire into the truth of the avowal, that of all the hewers of wood and drawers of water on this green earth, the slaves of the South are the most contented and happy, and improving the most rapidly physically, mentally, and morally. Is it not distressing that so dangerous a fanaticism should be fed and fuelled by man's inability to remember, that to judge properly of the condition of another he must consider not only the present circumstances surrounding him, but his past training? Has he been educated to plough? to make a student of him would be to insure his misery. Has he been a student? do not suddenly convert him into a ploughboy.

We know with what horror negro women trained to laborious field work, regard the idea of being metamorphosed into house-servants. We know how John and Isaac, and almost all field hands, would rather plough, or hoe, or split rails ten, twelve, fifteen, yes, eighteen out of the twenty-four hours, than to ride to market during the day in a comfortable Jersey-



wagon. You well recollect how I forgot the foregoing axiom during the long, hot days of last summer; how I was reminded of my forgetfulness by the poor, miserable, worn-out, worked-to-death darkies coming in at night, and playing the fiddle and dancing till I had to beg them, for their own sakes, to go to bed; and how I said, "I don't know what to do—those negroes mind me about everything else, but I'll have to whip 'em in order to make them sleep enough;" how I didn't whip them, and how the fiddling and dancing continued.

LIBERTY, Va., August 25.

I enclose you "Mammy," A Home Picture, by L. Virginia. Could it have been more appropriate had she known our "Mammy?" Let Alice read and save it for those other "children," of whose "cunnin' little ways" she talked at night to "Mistis."

I enclose, also, "The Railway," to remind you of the wanderer.

"'Tis nothing now the space which parts  
The distant from the dear;  
The wing that to her cherished nest  
Bears home the bird's exulting breast  
Has found its rival here,  
With speed like hers we too can haste,  
The bliss of meeting hearts to taste."

I start for Americus this afternoon. In less than a month I expect to embrace you, and ours.

Yours,

WILLIAM ATSON.

P. S. You say you wish you could receive a letter from me every day. Consider each sheet a letter; and here is a plenty for four days and a quarter, besides the poetry.

“MAMMY”—A HOME PICTURE.

BY L. VIRGINIA FRENCH.

Where the broad mulberry branches hang a canopy of leaves,  
Like an avalanche of verdure, drooping o'er the kitchen eaves;  
And the sunshine with its shadows, dainty arabesques have made  
O'er the quaint, old oaken settle, standing in the pleasant shade;  
Sits good “Mammy” with the “children,” while the summer after-  
noon

Wears the dewy veil of April, o'er the brilliancy of June.

Smooth and snowy is the 'kerchief, lying folded with an air  
Of matron dignity, above her silver-sprinkled hair,  
Blue and white the beaded necklace, used on Sundays to bedeck  
(A dearly cherished amulet) her plump and rosy neck;  
Dark her neatly ironed apron, of a broad and ample size,  
Spreading o'er the dress of “homespun” with its many-coloured  
dyes.

True, her lips are all untutored, but how genially they smile—  
And how eloquent their fervour, praying “Jesus, bress de chile!”  
True, her voice is hoarse and broken, but how tender its replies—  
Though her hands are brown and withered, yet how loving are her  
eyes;  
She has thoughts both high and holy, though her brow is dark and  
low—  
And her face is dusk and wrinkled, but her soul is white as snow!

An aristocrat is "Mammy"—and though usually sedate,  
"Haught as Lucifer" to "white trash," whom she cannot tolerate;  
Patronizing too, to "Master"—for she "nussed 'im when a boy;"  
Familiar, yet respectful to "my Mistis"—but the joy  
Of her bosom is "de children," and delightfully she'll boast  
Of the "born blood" of her darlings—"good as kings and queens  
a'most."

There she sits beneath the shadow, crooning o'er some olden hymn,  
Watching earnestly and willingly, although her eyes are dim,  
Laughing in her heart sincerely, but with countenance demure;  
Holding out before her "babies," every tempting little lure;  
Noting all their merry frolics with a quiet, loving gaze,  
Telling o'er at night to "Mistis" all their "cunnin' little ways."

Now and then her glance will wander o'er the pastures far away,  
Where the tasselled corn-fields waving to the breezes rock and sway;  
To the river's gleaming silver, and the hazy distance, where  
Giant mountain peaks are peering thro' an azure veil of air;  
But the thrill of baby voices—baby laughter low and sweet,  
Recall her in a moment to the treasures at her feet.

So "rascally," so rollicking, my bold and sturdy boy,  
In all his tricksy waywardness, is still her boast and joy;  
She'll chase him through the shrubbery—his mischief mood to cure;  
"Hi! whar dat little rascal now? de bars will get 'im shure!"  
When caught, she'll stoutly swing him to her shoulder, and in pride  
Is marching round the pathways, "just to see how gran' he ride."

And the "Birdie" of our bosoms—oh! how soft and tenderly  
Bows good "Mammy's" tender spirit to her baby witchery!  
All to her is dear devotion, whom the very angels bless,  
And all thoughts of her are blended with a holy tenderness;

Coaxing now, and now caressing, saying with a smile and kiss,  
“Jus for Mammy—dat’s a lady—won’t it now?” do that or this.

On the sweet white-tufted clover, worn and weary with their play,  
Toying with the creamy blossoms, now my little children lay :  
Harnessed up with crimson ribbons, rocking horses side by side,  
“Make believe” to eat their “fodder”—(blossoms to their noses  
tied ;)

Near them stands the willow wagon—in it “Birdie’s” mammoth  
doll—

And our noble “Brave” beside them, faithful guardian over all.

Above them float the butterflies, around them hum the bees ;  
And birdlings warble, darting in and out among the trees ;  
The kitten sleeps at “Mammy’s” side, and two brown rabbits pass,  
Hopping close along the paling, stealing through the waving grass,  
Gladsome tears blue eyes are filling, and a watching mother prays,  
“God bless ‘Mammy’ and my children in those happy halcyon  
days.”

FOREST HOME, 1856.

## LETTER XXXVII.

“The solemn—The serio-comic—And the silly.”

COLUMBUS, Ga., August 29, 1856.

DEAR MOLLY:—Four days ago I was at Liberty, Va., finishing a letter to you. Long as it was, I did not say all I desired.

Never give me an excuse to write about woman, George Washington, the Union, or the Deity, if you do not wish to be drowned with an overflow of ideas, which may to you, and would to many, appear erroneous and eccentric.

In the letter alluded to, I expressed my belief in the perpetuity, but hinted at the possibility of the dissolution of the Union. The natural and artificial ties that bind it together, cannot be severed without God's permission. Our own folly may gain this chastisement; and chastisement is sometimes necessary. Time is a school, and our experiences are lessons. The average life of man is sufficiently long for him to learn all that is necessary for him to know during its continuance. It requires ages to educate a nation, and cycles of ages to educate the world. The completed education of the world, is the millennium.

The seed designed to produce this result have been long



sown. They have sprouted, grown, and produced fruit in many a heart. These seed are the simplest ethical elements; simple as the elements out of which the physical universe was built. One God, one race. Be true to yourself, and love your neighbour sufficiently to do to him as you would have him do to you, are all the materials necessary for the construction of the New Heaven and the New Earth. Possession of these materials by man, combined with the knowledge how to use them, is moral perfection. The attainment of moral perfection by each human being, is the highest state of morality to which mankind can be elevated. And this universal moral elevation will doubtless be preceded or accompanied by proportionate mental and physical advancement—at least by an advancement in these particulars adequate to prevent the glory and happiness of holiness from being marred by any deficiency therein.

I have indulged, I still indulge, in the dream which haunts me with the impressiveness and seeming reality of a night vision, that my country is the Missionary created and appointed to sow by its example, its victories of peace and war, its commerce, its literature, its history, the millennial seed in every human heart.

I had hoped, I still hope, that these confederated stars will gradually, but without material interruption, brighten into a luminous glory, by the light of which the nations shall be freed. Interruption may, however, be necessary. The world may be too young by thousands of years for such a result. Lesson upon lesson, whipping upon whipping, may yet have to be administered by the great Teacher before the great pupil

will be prepared for graduation; before the final "Commencement" shall transpire. Man may now after six thousand years, inflated as he is with the radiant atmosphere of the nineteenth century, be only a Sophomore, blinded by faint glimmerings of light, the vision of knowledge upon which his practised eye shall ultimately gaze undimmed, being as yet unconceived, and inconceivable.

Empires, mighty in extent and gigantic in power, have risen and fallen. Their rise and fall were not permitted without a wise object.

Disunion, civil war among lion-hearted brothers, a cloud over *the starlight*, blasting storms, may be important for our Country's education, and the education of the World. Therefore fools and traitors may be allowed to destroy our Constitution; to tear down, to annihilate that sublime Pyramid which reposes upon the graves of their fathers—whose sides tell of their glory, and whose pinnacle points to God and prophecies of a descending Heaven.

I also referred to the distressing fact, that fanaticism and treachery, should have become sufficiently powerful to threaten the production of this pause in the continuous development of mankind, mainly by man's failure or inability to remember, or comprehend the effect upon his fellow-man of natural and educational differences.

To propose, under the influence of sympathy thus excited, the abolition of Southern slavery, is not more absurd than to propose the abolition of *the true woman*.

I am one of the most quiet of men. I can sit about the house the livelong day without discomfort. I want no liquor,

no cigar, no tobacco. I can step as lightly around the couch of sickness, handle the sick as delicately, and anticipate their wants as quickly, as any of your sex. I can nurse the little ones, day or night, with a mother's tender watchfulness. I am as easy in the company of woman as in that of man, and, like the former, love the society of the preachers.

In addition, observation, reading, and reflection justify to my mind the conclusion, that though the life of woman appears to be coupled with more misery, she enjoys as much happiness as man. Yet what could be more horrible to me than the idea of being, at my present age, with my existing disposition unchanged, in the midst of society metamorphosed into a woman? *What?* to have to ride a horse sideways; to mince my victuals; to wear tight gloves, and tight shoes; to keep out of the sunlight for fear of getting my complexion tanned; to take an hour to comb my hair, and probably have to curl it; to be deprived of the privilege of "crossing my benders," of putting my feet on the mantelpiece, or sticking them out of the window; of knocking down those who insult me; and worse than all, of "*poping* the question." This last of itself would be intolerable. Disgrace, or suicide, would be the result. The very idea caps the climax of agony. *What?* To be in love and wait for a slow fellow to make up his mind to court me; and in the meantime not even be permitted to inquire whether he was *deciding*, or when he would decide. The bare possibility of such a denouement would be worse torture than the thumb-screw, the boots, the embrace of the Virgin of the Inquisition.

If the dread thereof would be so painful to one so quiet,

and in some respects so womanly as myself—how horrible would the anticipation of such a metamorphosis be to the restless, swearing, smoking, tobacco-chewing, dram-drinking, unchaste wretches, who are likewise called men? The most of them had rather be male-slaves, than white women. Old Giddings, clever as he may be in some respects, would vastly prefer becoming “a buck negro” under a good master.

Were I a senator, I should be tempted to offer a resolution for the abolition of Ladies, and make a solemn speech upon the subject, dilating the views just expressed, expatiating in pathetic terms upon their slavery to public opinion, their slavery to etiquette, the slavery imposed on them by the marriage vow and the laws of the land, and end with a thrilling, a soul-moving appeal to the lovers of human freedom to rally to my standard and battle for the sacred cause.

Now you will say, and if a thousand others were to read these remarks they would say, “They are ridiculous. Certainly no one would be so silly, so fanatical, so diabolically traitorous to Society’s greatest good, as to favour this sort of Abolition.” Truth is stranger than fiction. I do not say there will be—I say there have been, and are, abolitionists of this sort. The Socialists, the Free-Lovers, the Female Medical Colleges, the Bloomers, Lucy Stone, and that pitiable imbodiment of masculine degradation, her husband, the “FAST women,” those corroding ulcers upon the fair fame of their sex, are doing all they can to abolish *the true woman, the lady*. And were this impudent, immodest, unchaste, fanatical band to attain political influence, cowardly Sumners, gipsy-featured



Wilsons, hideous-visaged Sowards, would soon become its leaders.

If these talented men are so reckless of good, so destitute of patriotism, or so weakly fanatical, as to ruin themselves and their country, because they cannot comprehend the propriety of yielding to the structure of society, of attending to their own business, and expending their sympathy and charity mainly upon their neighbours, why might they not be so silly, so monomaniacal, so devilishly depraved, as to attempt to extract the savour from woman, the salt of the earth?

"Let not your hearts be troubled," ye lovers of your race. The world is improving. Folly will evoke storm after storm, but these storms, while they blast their authors, purify the atmosphere. God holds the helm of the universe, and he will guide it aright. Our peculiar Institution will last as long as it ought, and ninety-nine hundredths of the female sex will always be, as they have ever been, chaste and true. Their organization prevents the possibility of general corruption. How cheering these views to the patriot and philanthropist! How peculiarly cheering to the husband, and the father of daughters, are those relating to your sex! Will you inquire where I learned them? I reply, From teachers, who would regard them as perfectly original with me, from my mother, my sisters, and yourself. Blessed is the man who has been thus taught, and ungrateful would he be not to feel, acknowledge, and rejoice in the blessing.

In my letter from Liberty, to which this is designed as a postscript or supplement, I intended to add, should Democracy, in the present political exigency, gain the entire sway, become



the only influential party, the probability is that such prosperity would accomplish its ruin more rapidly and completely than would the combined efforts of all its enemies; and hence the latter may derive hope even from its victories. I designed also to state the universal plea of all poor states: "The road runs through the poorest part." This you are told whether travelling by cars, stage, or horseback, and without being asked whether you came along the public road or followed a cow track.

Saturday, August 30. Just as I was beginning the preceding paragraph last night, the screams of "Fire, Fire," the brilliant illumination of a burning grocery store, the anticipated bursting of powder kegs, and the fizzing of blazing bacon, arrested my attention. I walked out to see, and, if necessary, to help; and on my return went to bed. Talk not to me, if you desire to start the tear in my eye, of passengers crushed to death by the clashing cars, or blown into eternity by bursting engines, of soldiers dying, sword in hand, amid the carnage, the tumult, the intoxicating glory, the mad ecstacy of battle.

Talk rather of the survivors; of the fatherless daughter struggling *womanly* to maintain life and virtue; of the sewing mother working and weeping for children that may starve or freeze; of husbands and fathers whose hard earnings, consecrated by honest toil, are suddenly destroyed by a blaze, and I may weep. Picture these sufferers with eyes that see only the Present, with ears that are deaf to the harmony of Providence, with minds that catch no glimpse of the promises, the restitutions, the beatitude of the approaching Hereafter, and I will

weep; weep that, with light all around, they should be ignorant that their trials are lessons intended to prepare them for "the glory which shall be revealed."

I have rested from my labours every Sabbath since I left home. The only sin I have committed on these days was writing to you. Was that a sin? I admit a man had as well be working or travelling on Sunday as writing business letters. But is it wrong to think on that day of Home and Heaven, or to write the thoughts they evoke? To-morrow I have to travel the entire day. The trip is an exceedingly disagreeable one, the means of conveyance being a stage. I could easily escape it, and have been tempted to do so. Of all the methods, however, by which I can be induced to do a thing, I believe the easiest is to convince me that it will be personally disagreeable, but had probably better be done. The fear that the failure to perform it will be the effect of temptation to self-indulgence, and not accordant with duty, generally settles the question against my own inclination. Thus, after an internal debate, unheard save by the Omnipresent, I start on another, after having just recovered from the fatigue and sickness produced by a former stage trip. This is why I spend to-day, instead of to-morrow, in writing to you.

Having room only for a few lines, I will tell you of a circumstance of which I was reminded by using the term "fast women." In Cheraw, at the Methodist church, at night, my attention was arrested by a beautiful girl, with familiar features, seated not far from me. During the prayer I caught her making signs and spelling on her fingers to a young gentleman across the aisle. Their conversation was continued for

some time, both watching for observers, but failing to detect one. I say nothing of the impiety, the irreverence, the delicacy of this act. I only say, before she knelt, I was perplexed to decide which she resembled most, you or Mrs. R.; but, as soon as suspicion cast a shade upon her character, the R. similitude predominated. The resemblance to you disappeared.

Telling this little occurrence reminds me of another trivial matter, at my own foolish talks to myself, about which I have frequently laughed. You know how I ridiculed the manner in which "the fast woman" from Philadelphia held up her dress while walking the streets of Memphis, that I thought it disfigured her form, spoiled the hang of the dress, had the appearance of being immodest; and that the designed appearance of immodesty in a woman is immodest.

Well, in all my travels I have never seen a pretty woman do this thing. From New York to Texas every female peculiarly afraid of soiling her dress is ugly. How do you account for this strange fact? Is ugliness neater than beauty? Or is beauty as neat, but more tasty and modest? I first thought the Skirt-Holders might be conscious of the defect in their faces, and trying to withdraw attention to their ankles. But this explanation was unsatisfactory. Self-conceit is too wisely distributed for the defective to be generally conscious of their defects; and, in addition, I could perceive nothing peculiarly charming about the ankles belonging to the ugly faces; or that the faces blushed beneath a detected gaze.

Hoping the foregoing medley of the solemn, the serio-comic, and the silly, may afford you amusement, I bid you adieu. In

twenty-five days, at the farthest, I expect to embrace you. Kiss the children, tell the servants howd'ye, and be at home.

Yours,

WILLIAM ATSON.



### LETTER XXXVIII.

Ugliness and Wealth.—Beauty and Poverty.—“Our Buds.”—Old Virginia.—“Amelia.”—“Mrs. French.”—An epic poem—The materials for.—Definition of Lady.—Of Gentleman.—Human nature.—Self.—Hand-writing.—Effect of children.

COLUMBUS, Geo., August 31, 1856.

DEAR MOLLY:—I expected to be rocking and jolting to-day on my way to Cuthbert. Instead of that I am comfortably housed, first reading the poetry of Isaiah and then writing to wife and children. I say children, because I can never divest myself of the idea that they will read or hear from their mother's lips, at least as much of what I write as they can comprehend. Hence I cannot resist the temptation to express views you already understand, and indulge in little criticisms on female improprieties, and other small matters that could be of no service to you.

The reason I am not travelling is that on last night the winds blew, the rains descended, the floods came; and, desiring neither to be drowned nor water-bound away out in the piney pondy forest, I determined to remain till the cars started, and visit Cuthbert from Americus,

The rain is still descending, and the wind still blowing. It is a somewhat singular coincidence that the only region where high water interfered with me last winter, should be that in which the same cause frustrates my plan this dry season.

As the whistling wind and the furiously pattering rain preclude the idea of attending church, I will "write up" the oft-remembered and as oft-forgotten journal.

Beauty and Poverty generally go together. Show me two girls walking side by side, one possessing beauty and intellect, the other mediocre in every particular; tell me that one is poor, the other rich, and I will question you no farther to ascertain the possessor of the wealth. Could a gambler "get bets" on a hundred such couples he might safely risk all he had on Beauty being poor, and Ugly wealthy, and calculate on winning at least seventy-five. Then he might safely bet that the twenty-five remaining Beauties were afflicted with some mental, moral, physical, or family defects or trials which reduced them to a level in happiness with the poor Uglies, and calculate on winning twenty of these bets. The same is true of states, of countries, of sections of the globe. Health, beauty, and fertility rarely reside in the same locality. There may, however, be exceptions in this particular, and there are exceptions in our race. Men have been wealthy and intellectual, and women have been wealthy, intellectual, and beautiful. But woe to such if goodness dwell not in their hearts, and control not their conduct. This pearl of great price exists, however, only in hearts where a tender conscience resides, and great gifts beget high responsibilities. Simple, therefore, must be the theology and clear the faith of him who, with a



tender conscience, can be contented and happy in the darkness of earth, amid the responsibilities, the restlessness, the temptations, the detractions to which Genius and Power expose him. Strong must be his nerves, if he do not shiver in the Alpine blasts. Firm, unwavering, fearless must be his heart, and faithful and fixed his gaze upon the bright realm beyond, if misery does not follow his steps and cloud his spirit, if, rendered dizzy by his elevation, he does not fall into an abysm of wretchedness to which the momentum of the less exalted would be insufficient to sink them.

Senator Butler, in reply to the fanatic Sumner, said he could not understand how any man who had read History could be a bigot. It is certainly no less strange how a man who has looked below the surface of society can be *envious*. As a schoolboy boarding in different families, as a physician entering into the very arcana of society, as a business-man peeping into the commercial heart of the nineteenth century, as a traveller wandering through diverse climes, as a reader of the history of the world, I have been taught that there is a wondrous equality in the God-appointed condition of men. Standing in the focus of these rays of light, I am satisfied that this teaching has been correct, and can truly say, while I would advise no one to swap with me, I could not be induced to exchange myself soul, body, and condition with any human being that lives and moves on this green earth. Poor, humble, weak, short-sighted as I know myself to be, I know also that I am healthy, fearless, happy, faithful.—Yes, full of that faith which assures me that God would rend the heavens and descend visibly to earth, to lead an honest struggler after truth

into the right path, rather than allow such an one to work his way into the misery of ultimate and hopeless error. I hope there are thousands in every clime better and happier than myself, but I do not *know* them, and, not knowing them, the exchange spoken of would be to risk a certainty which is obscure for an uncertainty that might be brilliant only in prospect.

When I think of our delicately organized, sensitive, little daughters being reared to womanhood in a circle of refinement and luxury, entering the jostling world without any of the adventitious aids of position and wealth, I cannot but shrink as I see, by fancy, their feelings wounded by intentional or thoughtless neglect, and they politely pushed back for those who perhaps are only superior in these external charms. Teach them not to expect much from others, but to require a great deal of themselves, to be sensitive about their honour, but somewhat callous to trivial slights. Teach them to be proud, but not vain. Teach them not to fret themselves because of the prosperity of their neighbours; that happiness nestles in the heart, and cannot be driven or seduced therefrom, so long as its possessor has right views and does his duty; and that their father, and, I think I may add, their mother, educated amid the spoiling influences of aristocracy and affluence, were never happier than when every earthly hope seemed blasted, and Trouble, rigged in the raiments of Despair, attempted to brow-beat them into misery. Do you not perceive that home is the diamond pivot around which all my thoughts revolve? I intended to say, and should have said three pages back, had not the intervening faces of the

brats caused a parenthesis, that Virginia was no exception to the rule laid down; that Health and Beauty have not banished Poverty from her domain. My entry into this state was at Danville. Thence I journeyed to Burkesville, and from this place over "The Break Neck" railroad\* via "The High Bridge," Lynchburg, Liberty, Salem, Christianburg, &c., to Abingdon.

From entrance to exit there is but little fertility and no ugly landscape. The scenery along the entire route goes through all the variations of beauty from pretty to magnificent. It never stoops below the first. It may occasionally transcend the latter limit. On the banks of the Dan it is simply pretty. The first glimpse of the beautiful is caught as you pass over "The High Bridge," and gaze upon the hills around and the undulating valley of the Appomattox beneath. This bridge is said to be about one hundred and fifty feet high, to have cost the state \$300,000, and to be entirely unnecessary, having been built by the folly of an engineer, who was too envious and imbecile to follow a route previously surveyed by a competitor.† It is undoubtedly dangerous, and will probably at some distant day "cave in," and produce a smash of cars and passengers, which will give editors an opportunity of inditing an

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\* The term "Break Neck" was mentioned as the cognomen of this road by the seared passengers, who "had to take liquor" after the engine was thrown off the track. It did not appear to me more dangerous than others over which I have travelled in the north and in the south.

† The remarks about the cost of the High Bridge, and the engineer who directed its construction, are based upon mere rumour, and may be totally untrue. I for one cannot believe it.

interesting paragraph upon "A Railroad Disaster," containing *a rather late* lecture on the danger of high bridges.

When riding over this one, my enjoyment of the scenery was interrupted by a scary old lady, who wanted to be allowed to get out and walk; and a scary young man who was sitting behind me. To the latter I made some very appropriate and encouraging remarks, to which he replied with pale face and solemn accent, but which seemed to divert the gentleman beside me. "Don't you," said I, "think we are in great danger? The cars seem to shake a good deal. Don't you think there is something wrong? Why, the bridge is shaking, is it not?" The fellow did not recover his colour for several minutes after he was safe.

Of James River you can form a very good idea from my description of Lynchburg, by adding to the picture of hills and streams irregular and widening valleys covered with the green tobacco plants. There is but little monotony in the scenery of Virginia. Even the forests charm you by their vast variety. Pines now, oaks presently, then an admixture of these with chestnut, cedar, and many other kinds of tree and shrub. The upturned soil varies still farther the green and woody prospect with its crimson hue.

I had almost as soon try to describe sweet Nellie's countenance, when it throws me into ecstasy, as attempt to daguerreotype on another's mind the beauties of the Blue Ridge. As, however, you are a lover of nature, and I owe you some compensation for the many long-winded reflections which you have been forced to peruse, I must make the effort.

We are at sea. Our ship sits becalmed upon the motionless



waters. Now clouds begin to darken the horizon. Now Eolus wakes up, and from every cardinal point the winds begin to blow. Their fury increases. Now they howl in fierce agony. Mountain waves, that pile their irregular crests above the thunder's home, almost circumscribe us. Between these, old ocean assumes every possible position, from deep dell, tiny dale, unruffled plain, undulating valley, to hillock and hill. At this climax of commotion, God says to the storm: "Hush!" to the rocking waves, "Be still!" They obey. The scene changes. The waters disappear. We are in a car on dry land, coursing contiguous to the base of the mountains, that once were billows. Jagged rocks jut from their sides and pinnacle their summits. Evergreen trees proudly shake their branches above the verdant forests beneath. At their bases flow numerous streams. Between them repose the dells, the dales, the valleys, the hillocks, the hills, vital with animal and vegetable life; the whole canopied by the blue sky, and effulgent with the gorgeous sunlight. On moves the car. A farm-house is now in sight. Yonder is a horse prancing in the meadow. There is a bevy of cattle browsing in the valley. Now the glitter of church-steeple tells of an humbly placed village. Away below in the deep smiling dell appears a company of blooming girls, waving their handkerchiefs to us from the railroad, that leads to the White Sulphur Springs; and around us still is the deep, dark tint of the mountains, deeper, darker, more beautifully blue than old ocean's far-famed hue.

We are surrounded. The mountainous circle seems now complete. In front, at least, appears no way of escape. Can the iron-horse climb the sky-reaching impediment? He does



not stop to consider the question, but with one wild shriek rushes into it. One moment of darkness, and we are again in the sunlight. The horse was mistaken—the main mountain is before him. On he rushes, reckless of danger. Another wild shriek, and the horse and his riders are in utter darkness. We are in the bowels of the mountain. We are passing through it. *We are through.* We have emerged into the milder beauty of hill and valley.

This milder beauty lingers through Western Virginia and East Tennessee. The scenery occasionally startling the traveller by glimpses of the magnificent, as he passes “The Iron,” “The Stone,” and Bay’s Mountain; or touching his heart with a richer glow of loveliness, as he crosses or winds his way beside the Holston, the Tennessee, or the Hiawasee river. Now shut your eyes, and think of Nellie. Then open them, and look at the electrical reality. By this means you can form some estimate of the inferiority of the picture I have painted, to the scenery through which I have passed. Recollect, too, that I have applied to it no word stronger than magnificent, and that there are other sections of the Old Dominion.

Misty remembrances of a stage—of Annie seated by my side, when both our hearts were young—of a road winding its tortuous way from Richmond to Guyandott, through a region where Beauty frequently robes herself in the habiliments of Sublimity—haunt my soul with their mystic influences.

What a glorious meeting-place for the North and the South are the springs that nestle in these mountain vales! How it would delight me, travel-worn as I am, to take you amid the

health-inspiring breezes of these blue ridges, and let you feast upon their beauties, while the light was stealing back into your eye, and the rose transferred its colour to your cheek ! But enough of this—it might have been wiser merely to have said, in a sort of half-plagiarism from Amelia,—brave are thy sons, sweet are thy valleys, and grand are thy mountains, my own native land.

Oh, that this sweet poetess could have seen what I have seen ; that she might, by simple songs, such as children love to lisp, have painted its beauty on the heart of America's youth !

It does seem to me that L. Virginia might not only do this, but that she might attach immortality to her name by an epic on her native state. She possesses the strong judgment, the affluent imagination, the omnipotence of expression, adequate to the production of a poem which would compare favourably with Homer's *Iliad* ; and almost equal the sublimity of Job, or the more polished grandeur of Milton. Does she possess the necessary humility, docility, patience, perseverance, studiousness ? Is her character tainted with too much Byronic bitterness ? Or will her womanly heart yield to its maternal impulses, and permit the little prattler at her knee to rob his country of that which would silence the assumptions of England's literati ?

The materials for such a work are abundant. The Atlantic two hundred years ago ; the brave Columbus and his mutinous crew sailing thereon ; the discovery of the New World ; its forests, its beasts, its birds, its flowers ; the Aborigines ; their warriors, their maidens, their loves, their stampedes, their

wars, the tomahawk, and scalping knife; the pilgrim fathers; the earlier trials, struggles, battles of the first colonists of Virginia; her heroines, her Washington—the sun that moves alone in the empyrean of human glory; her Henry, Madison, Jefferson, Marshall—stars that add beauty to the sunlit firmament; her scenery; her more recent history; her high position in the Confederacy; the subtle radiations that bind her with the weird chains of filial affection and respect to this glorious galaxy; liberty, civil and religious, personified; its flight from the corruption and slavery of the *Old World*, its settlement and miraculous development in the New; its glorious destiny; a glance at some of these things, and a more detailed history of others, might be woven by genius into a stately song; its diverse parts being softened, beautified, and linked by the love-trials of a lovable American woman, adorned with every womanly grace, whilst, ever present, above all, brighter than the stars, more luminous than the sun, seated in serene majesty, the effulgence veiled in mystic shadows, should be visible PROVIDENCE, with its benevolent aspect, its omnific arm, its all-seeing eye.

September 1, 1856, COLUMBUS.

I am not certain that I ever witnessed at this season so long-continued a storm of rain and wind as raged the whole of yesterday. The stage did not even risk the trip from which I desisted. The limbs of trees are lying about the pavements.

This morning I started on the cars, and had to return—a bridge across the Eupatoi, or, as it is vulgarly called, “Booth’s Creek,” having been blown down. The telegraphic wires are

also broken. We can, therefore, hear no news of the damage beyond. The remains of the poor crops are doubtless well nigh destroyed.

One lady accompanied us to the Eupatoi. She attracted my attention by her sprightly and sensible conversation. Her volubility, her friskiness, the girlish vivacity and freedom of her manners, began to annoy me, when I heard her drop the word "asylum." It immediately struck me that she was deranged, and, in a few minutes afterwards, the cars stopped. She then took out her Bible, and read aloud, in quite an impressive manner, several chapters; and told me she thought religious excitement had caused her relapse into insanity. She was the picture of health and happiness; singing, talking, whistling. I was framing a severe criticism upon the unwomanly nonchalance of her manners, when a suspicion of the truth flashed across my mind. This changed the whole current of my feelings. I had several opportunities of serving her; and I can assure you I did not let them pass unimproved.

September 2, AMERICUS, Geo.

Just after writing the foregoing, I made another experiment in travelling, which proved successful, and arrived here to tea last evening. The deranged lady came as far as Fort Valley. On the cars was also a woman, with a small dog in her lap. She was reputed to be, and was, apparently, in her senses. If, however, a certain balance of the mental faculties is essential to sanity, perhaps the question would be, Who is sane? and not Who is insane?

Within the reflections thus suggested, there is vast room for



that Charity which "hopeth all things." A sensible woman would never twine her affections around a poodle, so long as there is an orphan child in the world. A modest woman should never carry one in public. The remarks of every crowd of men she passes, if overheard, would redden her whole face with an indelible blush. You are aware how habitually I defend the motives, the moral integrity of a defamed man or woman. How nothing short of *overt* acts, proved and indisputable, will convince me that a sane being can be so silly as to do, deliberately and intentionally, what he believes, at the time and under the circumstances, to be wrong. This charity does not, however, prevent me from seeing the follies and foibles of mankind, and searching for my own.

I know that a good woman is not necessarily a lady. I meet such frequently, who are slovenly in dress, assume ungraceful positions, talk too loud, and have not sufficient politeness to thank a gentleman for an act of courtesy. A lady, is an embodiment of delicacy, tact, modesty, and polished goodness. Take Mrs. P. to a mirror, look therein, and you will see one; but whether it be yourself or her, this deponent saith not.

I know also that there are good men who are not gentlemen. I have seen such, who would stare at the stranger as he passed, look over his shoulder while writing, greet him with no cordiality when he introduced himself, and not even ask him to take a seat in their store or their house, who would be astonished to learn that he had hesitated to "make himself at home;" who could never be made, save by experience, to understand that the first advances of the sensitive stranger are



his Rubicon, the fording of which requires effort, but results in a nonchalance that calmly determines to overlook, condemn, or fight, according to subsequent developments. A gentleman, is one who, quickly and gracefully, in small things and great, does unto others as he would have them do unto him.

I have seen some who were born gentlemen. C. and T., raised in the midst of great disadvantages, proved themselves to be of this class. Specimens of this kind are, however, exceedingly rare. Most gentlemen have been made such by early training and association. As a man, who did not learn to read when a boy, will rarely ever spell correctly, so a man who did not have gentlemanly graces instilled into him when young, rarely ever becomes a gentleman. However good, they lack the sensitiveness, the tact that instantly realizes the position and feelings of another. Hence, they cannot learn the minor secrets of propriety, or acquire the effortless, unobtrusive, and invisible art of making a companion or guest feel easy. These reflections have been suggested by observing my fellow-travellers, and considering the effect of hotels, steamboats, and railroads, upon their manners.

Opportunity always improves the sensible. Such are fully aware, that a flying trip to Philadelphia or New York, repeated annually, does not render them learned or polished. They do not mistake painted castaways for merchants' wives. Their knowledge of human nature instructs them that good dwells in the sea of hearts, which rocks between the isthmus of defenceless, tempted Poverty, and that of a self-indulgent, do-nothing aristocracy; that even upon these narrow domains, Virtue battles with Vice, and often gains glorious victories.

The more this class of men travel, the more they learn. And the more they learn, the less vain, the more modest, the more teachable, the less bigoted they become. Travelling, therefore, improves them.

There is, however, another, and, I am pleased to think, a much smaller class, whose members had better have remained tied to their mother's apron, or under the sweet influences of wife and children. These are generally quick-witted, sprightly-minded persons, who see a good deal, and hear a good deal, that others, with good eyes and good ears, travelling the same road, at the same time, neither see nor hear. These are they who reason from the exception, and not from the rule; who "jump to conclusions," and see what they do see clearly, because they have not sufficient width of vision even to be aware, that the part at which they are looking, is not the whole. Hence they are generally glib talkers, and bold assertors, with dogmatic convictions. They change repeatedly, and repeatedly express views totally at war with one another; but admit no fickleness in themselves, and perceive no incongruity in their expressions. They are generally vain, thinking themselves smart, and frequently fool wiser people into the same opinion. I have discovered so much unexpected good sense in the serious and the slow, and been so often astonished by the want of depth in the quick-witted, that I would say to our bright-eyed buds: Whenever you meet a young man who is *very sprightly*, WATCH, and do not be surprised if, *in the end*, you find him *very silly*.

Travelling teaches such persons much that should be unlearned. It makes them showy; gives them the appearance

of being learned, by storing their memories with "picked up" and undigested information; confirms their vanity; augments their bigotry; contracts their minds; hardens their hearts; and, instead of polishing them with refinement, daubs them with impudence.

Consider these characters—the occasional lady and gentleman; the more numerous, but unpolished good women and sensible men; the less numerous, but sprightly, impudent, and vain *sillies*; then picture to yourself all the variations, modifications, and shades of character and physiognomy that lie within and between my descriptions of these; remembering to keep up the same proportions, and you will see my traveling companions.

You will also observe in the crowd one very common-looking fellow, whose countenance, when not relaxed by a smile, appears as solemn as death. He is generally silent; and when silent, is apparently in a brown-study. Now he is muttering to himself; now there is a tear in his eye; now he is smiling; now he is serious again; now some emotion or thought makes his face quiver, and his eyes sparkle. Well, that fellow in the middle of the car, who looks so common, and seems to think himself alone in the desert of Sahara, is your husband. Whatever others may do, he thinks happy thoughts, and has his own quiet fun out of his own as well as the eccentricities of others. The fool, excuse me for saying so, really believes that man *may* be happy anywhere, in any circumstances; and has the audacity to assert, in opposition to all the old women, that happiness is preferable to misery.

I am waiting here to see two absent gentlemen, and have

afternoon and evening before me ; but really must stop writing. Would I ever finish ? One thought suggests others in profuse and endless succession. Is it wonderful that men who live in the midst of cities, making composition a business, can issue volume after volume ?

You say I cannot write too much for you. Doubtless you think so ; but when I look over my scrawls, and find it difficult to read my own thoughts, freshly penned, I can but wonder whether you can read them at all, or, at least, with sufficient ease to make the perusal agreeable. The misfortune with me is, that the better my brain works, the worse my pen scratches and blots. So that the very parts which might be interesting, are frequently almost illegible.

Is this letter worse written than usual, or does it seem so to me because my attention is directed to it ? There are portions that absolutely look horribly hideous. Compare these with that fac-simile of Byron's manuscript, beginning,

“ Storm and darkness, ye are wondrous strong,  
And lovely in your strength as is the light  
Of a dark eye in woman,”

and you will, I think, be struck with the similarity. Such similarity would disprove the dogma that the handwriting indicates the character. Could there be two men more dissimilar than Byron and myself ? The one a genius and a misanthrope ; the other a fool and a philanthropist !

What a wonderful influence have children upon parents ! How they quicken all the senses of the soul ! How they make us feel the weight of our responsibilities, great and small, not only as parents, but as patriots !



People may joke about it as much as they please, but a married candidate would, other things being equal, always receive my vote when running against an old bachelor. Unless the circumstances are peculiar—unless a widowed mother, orphan sisters, or adopted children, depend upon him for subsistence and education—the latter will begin to deteriorate so soon as his bachelorism becomes confirmed—so soon as he ceases to be a young man. And this deterioration will progress until he attains a selfish, disgraceful, ruinous recklessness; or freezes into a statue of icy and polished selfishness. It takes a family to break up, to cultivate the soil of the soul.

As the very least of the effects of a child upon the feelings of a father I will mention, that I never felt ashamed of my handwriting till Alice began to learn to write. I have written to one of the mightiest of mankind, to the greatest of living poets, to learned editors, to the most accomplished businessmen, and recked not of the handwriting. I courted you with scratches and blotches, but felt no shame on their account. To have, however, to say to a little child, that child being mine, "Take more pains with your writing," makes the blush mantle my cheek.

I have felt this so sensibly that I would frequently have copied my letters to you, but for two reasons. First, the want of time; secondly, if I copy I will alter and attempt to improve, and these alterations and attempted improvements might give a formality and stiffness to my correspondence, which would not suit the taste of a wife, who desires only love.

The period for absence is still shortening; I will soon kiss you all.

Yours affectionately,

WILLIAM ATSON.



## LETTER XXXIX.

Egotistical.—Confessions.—Is a man bound to hear an inferior preacher?—Methodist preachers.—Knott, Chapman, Baskerville.—Thweatt's Portrait.—The Episcopal Church.—An imbecile Episcopal minister.—The Liturgy.—The Baptist Church.—The Presbyterian Church.—Two Presbyterian ministers.—Predestination and moral agency.—Their children.—Humility and charity.—Recapitulation.—And now for home.

AMERICUS, Geo., September 3, 1856.

DEAR MOLLY:—I sometimes think my letters to you contain too much about myself, and hesitate to relate trivial personal incidents. If however any critic could tell me, either how a husband can write letters pleasing to his wife, or how any one can keep a "journal" of his own thoughts, associations, and acts without making himself prominent therein, he would oblige me by imparting the information. I would be willing to give such an one a premium—a brass button, a barlow knife, a vote for Congress, or something of the sort, if he would instruct me *how to do both of these things at once*, without being somewhat egotistical.

These remarks have been elicited by a dim remembrance of what I have previously written, and a present hesitancy to relate an occurrence or two connected with my trip. I think,

however, I should disgorge these, because my reflections are generally so pious, that you might calculate upon seeing a saint, when I return, and consequently be very much surprised to see my old friend the devil accompanying me. The other reason, which stimulates me to the disgorgement, is that you and I have always differed about the cause, which seems to influence every one everywhere with whom I have come into disagreeable collision, from childhood's hour to the present moment, to permit me to denounce or insult them with impunity. I think it is principally owing to the facts, that I do what I do, and say what I say, right from the heart, without affectation, and with no reference to display; and that honest courage, calm, collected, and *revengless*, obstinate merely in asserting and defending its reserved rights, and ever eager, if in error, to make the amende honorable, is almost omnipotent, blanching the coward's cheek, arousing the love of the brave, and eliciting the admiration and respect of both. You contend that the effect in my case is produced, either by the terrible aspect, which wrath excited by slight provocations gives my countenance, or when the difficulty becomes serious, by that calm solidity of appearance and manner, which seems to say, "Come one, come all; I am ready."

Did you ever acknowledge you were mistaken, or alter an opinion in your life? If not, you will have to do so now; or your woman's ingenuity will have to work laboriously.

A gentleman in North Carolina grumbled because I took a seat by him. I explained to him my reasons for doing so; that I had a right to do it; that the car was so full as to render it necessary for me to sit by some one; that I had accidentally

gotten into a seat next to him, and saw no peculiar cause for changing. This explanation did not satisfy him. He continued to grumble. I then said to him: "I should like to know the motive of your conduct. If you desire to get into a difficulty, just say so. You have had the good luck to meet the very man who will accommodate you." He was mum for awhile, then began a conversation on a different subject; and finally apologized.

You will reply: "However mild your tone, your countenance was quivering with wrath, or indicated cool determination." That was well said, but how will you explain the following? I took a middle seat in the stage. The contractor or agent requested me to accommodate a gentleman, with two ladies, and a negro, who had chartered six seats, by yielding the one in which I was sitting. I consented, provided he would procure me a middle or back seat in the other stage, as riding on the front seat makes me sick. This happened at night. While the parley was going on, the ladies not having as yet made their appearance, some one said to the gentleman, who desired the seat, "*I would have it.*" I replied, "You would, would you? Confound your infernal soul, suppose you help the gentleman take it?" "I was not talking to you," he exclaimed. "Yes, but confound you, you were talking at me."

Now let's hear you explain this on your principles, my beautiful combatant. It was dark, we could not see each other. I was within, and the insulted was outside the stage. We did not know each other. The next morning I learned he was a passenger, and met him at breakfast. He was a

large, fine-looking man, with black whiskers and martial air. It is well he didn't know how scary I was, or he would have "taken after me." But this would have been useless, for like all scary animals I am endowed with fleetness.

These were the chief ruffles upon the current of my temper. "Butter would scarcely have melted in my mouth," at any other parts of my journey. Talking of the devil and fighting, reminds me of the church and preaching. I have omitted but one opportunity of hearing a sermon since leaving home. That was at Weldon. I went to the church, saw the congregation assembled, but that no minister was there, and concluded, as I needed exercise, to walk about until one arrived. Just as I had returned and was going in, Doctor G. stated to me that two preachers were present, one a good speaker, the other below mediocrity; and that he was waiting outside to see which would preach. The inferior arose. Remembering an idea of Doctor Franklin's, on the subject of hearing indifferent sermons, and thinking myself that a ministerial ignoramus has no more right, than any other species of ignoramus, to require a freeman to be publicly bored by him, I walked away; and returning to my room read the Bible till bedtime. Even you, I presume, will admit the contents of this book to be at least equal to those of an ordinary sermon.

The preacher G. and I deserted was a Methodist. Another night, in another and larger place, I walked into a finer church belonging to the same denomination. A boy of nineteen or twenty delivered a sophomoric discourse, which "*the sisters*" seemed to appreciate. With good training, if docile and



studious, he may in the course of eight or ten years learn to preach sufficiently well for men to listen to.

This uncertainty as to whom or what you will hear is the greatest objection to attending the Methodist Church. It can and should be removed. No boy, no fool, no retailer of Chinese anecdotes, no human monkey, no one destitute of sufficient dignity of deportment to hush the sneer of ridicule, no one incompetent to teach, or below mediocrity in mental capacity or speaking ability, should be licensed to ascend the pulpit.

But for the uncertainty alluded to, I should decidedly prefer attending that Church. Thitherward I should generally wend my way, could I calculate upon hearing the word expounded by an accomplished Knott, a learned Chapman, or even such an one as the strong-minded, original, and eccentric Baskerville, who, in a paroxysm of pious wrath, said to his lukewarm parishioners, "You are as cold as though you were at the North Pole, in the centre of a spot where icebergs have been dashing together for a million of years, and if you don't stir up you'll be damned, and *I'll be damned*, if I don't tell you of it."

I should never attend any other fold, if every Sabbath found me in hearing of the sonorous voice of that lovable shepherd, the Rev. H. C. Thweatt. I see him now—almost a fac-simile in appearance of the noble-looking Fillmore. The only perceptible physical difference being that which indicates their mental diversity. The ex-President's eyes have a bright, calm expression. The Preacher's a restless, imaginative, star-like twinkle. One was made for the Pulpit, the other for the Chair



of State. Both are humble men, anxious to do their duty. One is known to fame, and accustomed to admirers. The other would be astonished to hear, that a travelled man, a man who has heard Soule, Andrews, Payne, Stockton, Maffit, Durbin, Bethune, Skinner, Tyng, Page, Otey, Hawks, and a host of others equally gifted, pronounces him superior to them all in pulpit eloquence. Amiable, honest, modest, and faithful, he thanks God that he has been reduced from wealth to poverty, and for the sake of souls, and a hundred dollars per annum, slips away from the brilliant centres of civilization, where Affluence, Genius, Fame, and Fashion would delight to do him homage, to scatter pearls before backwoods audiences.

Does not the memory of this scholar destitute of pedantry, this Chesterfield unconscious of his graces, this conversationist modest in the midst of thoughtful fluency, this orator without vanity, this minister without bigotry, this meek man, this true Christian, carry you back to the time, when I sat in a lowly church, casting amid the pauses of his eloquence sly glances at a lovely maiden's face?

Let's hear him again. He is in the pulpit. The prayer and the hymn are over. He reads his text. There is a simple grace and majesty in every movement. He begins the sermon with quiet animation. He is saying now what he intended to say. He can't keep at that long. There is a struggle. He does not stop a moment, but an observant eye discovers, that he is battling with a multitude of mighty thoughts that pray for utterance. Words rush out, arguments reverberate, images flash and sparkle. It won't do. The more he struggles the hotter gets the inner fire. The mental engine

will burst, if steam is not "let off" more rapidly. He yields, diverges from his plan, and lets his vigorous fancy loose. His face reddens, the veins of his temples distend, his eyes quiver and glow with intenser brilliancy; and the church is filled with the finest of human voices, a voice loud, deep, clear, and musical. He is in the midst of a ten minutes' sentence. Clause after clause—clause after clause, beautiful and precise, has flowed Choate-like from his lips, till the labyrinth of clauses begins to perplex, bewilder, and alarm the auditory. Still on he goes, no hesitation, no pause, no apparent breathing, deeper and deeper into the wordy entanglement—the labyrinthine sentence. He is gone.

Don't be alarmed. It is Leviathan sporting in the sea's blue depths. It is Thweatt merely rioting for a moment in the luxury of brilliant thoughts and magic fluency.

He *recollects* his audience, toys for awhile with the naiads sporting in the coral caves, as if loath to leave them, then slowly begins to ascend by an untried route, and climbs by clause after clause of brighter thoughts and richer verbal gems to the aerial and sunlit climax. Some speakers open their mouths, and the words pour out. There is no apparent intellect or soul working behind. The organs of speech seem to be the manufactory of the ideas. The sentences have a mechanical sound. No such person, however sensibly or fluently he talks, can be an orator. The audience must perceive mind and soul at work during the discourse. Words apparently from any other than this ethereal manufactory never reach the hearer's heart. Thweatt's ideas flashing

from his soul reach the souls of others before their spiritual aroma escapes.

The divinest intellectual treats I have ever enjoyed, consisted in watching the workings of his mental machinery; in following his dives into the sea of thought; in wondering at his classic and victorious fluency; in admiring the almost motionless dignity of his person, and the still ever changing manner and look; in drinking with the ears his phrases of chastened beauty, conducted by the varying organ-tones of his melodious voice.

The pleasure of these remembrances of Thweatt are augmented by the reflection, that you have enjoyed the variations of his pulpit-music; that you have followed the gentler flow of his thoughts, participated in the pleasantness of his deep descents, and felt the ecstasy of his effulgent climaxes.

I hope he will neither die, deteriorate, or "backslide" before our children have an opportunity of hearing, and are old enough to appreciate their father's and their mother's favourite.

CUTHBERT, Geo., September 5.

The fact that we cannot always hear such men as the friends alluded to, and the uncertainty as to who and what we will hear at the Methodist Church, combined with the visage of a certain Episcopal lady of my acquaintance, and the certainty that while you may not be dazzled by eloquence, you need not apprehend being annoyed by impudent ignorance, or deafened by boisterous stupidity at the Episcopal Church, reduces my predilections for the former to an equilibrium with those for the latter.

There is however no doubt, but that the greater freedom of the Methodist ministers from the restraints of forms, the excitability which the tastes of their membership encourage, and the circumstance of their being "called to," not educated for the ministry, elicit the eloquence I have extolled, and cause the deficiency of which I have complained. They are calculated to exhibit the weakness of the weak, and the strength of the strong. In them may be discovered the reason why eloquent Methodist divines so far outnumber those of any other denomination. They do this in proportion to numbers. But when this excess is considered in reference to learning and ability, the proportion surpasses computation.

I have been disappointed but once, in attending the Episcopal Church. In Columbia, S. C., I heard a minister, whose voice was weak and indistinct, whose physiognomy was almost idiotic, whose manner was fidgety, whose mind was imbecile, discourse in an elegant church to a congregation highly polished and doubtless very wealthy. He was the pastor, and the disagreeableness of hearing him was mitigated by the reflection, that his parishioners must be kind-hearted, or they would not at one of our principal seats of learning, and with the money-power in their possession, listen Sunday after Sunday to the inaudible mutterings of an old man, merely because he is amiable.

This however was an exception, and under the quieting influence of age and wife I am becoming fonder of the Episcopal worship. The solid splendour of the liturgy, the well regulated forms, the fine music, the good English of the sermon, are



more pleasing to me now, than when in youth I admired nothing of this kind, that did not startle, arouse, electrify me.

AMERICUS, Geo., September 7.

Notwithstanding the foregoing remark about the liturgy, do not suppose I ever go through it except in half hammond "style," that is, by a hop, skip, and a jump. It is singular how any sensible person can follow the lead of the minister directly through it. Every sentence is so suggestive of thought.

"The Lord is in his holy temple." Is it possible? Can it be that he, who built the universe out of nothing, who holds the ocean in the hollow of his hand, who rides upon the storm and directs the whirlwind, who made and loves, and will judge us, is present, is in our very midst, is looking right at us, hearing our words, seeing our persons and our hearts? It is true that Ubiquity is His home, but is it true that he is peculiarly near and peculiarly observant of us, when assembled in the temple dedicated to his worship; that prayer increases His proximity to us? Do not let us argue such a point. We know that churches do good, and that prayer blesses the heart. If the doctrine indicated be an illusion, it is a harmless one. Rob us not of its purifying pleasures.

By the time these or other thoughts have gleamed like lightning through my mind, the minister and congregation are several verses ahead. Of these I have not heard a word. I grit my teeth, say to Thought, "Be still and listen," then find the place, and begin again. Probably something in the first line re-excites this disobedient attendant. Again I check



myself, "catch up," rivet my attention, but before a page is perused Thought spreads her wings, looks at the minister, and at the congregation as a body, and as individuals, applies in a variety of ways what is being read to their appearance, their manners, their peculiarities, and then on the melody of some sublimer expression mounts to the blue ether. Thus, in reading, criticising, thinking, the hour passes away, and the service ends.

But to continue. The Baptist Church was never a favourite of mine. A variety of circumstances produced this effect. The main reason, however, originates in the stress they lay upon *the form* of baptism. I can understand how forms may be necessary, as initiatory ceremonies into any society, on account of the solemn and public, and therefore memorable obligation, an obligation neither to be forgotten, evaded, or denied, which it imposes upon the initiated, the influence of this person's example upon those who witness the initiation, and the power it gives the society into which he has been initiated over him, who thus pledges allegiance to it.

In this light the supposed initiatory ceremonies of Masonry, of Odd Fellowship, of Baptism, and giving the hand in the Methodist, of Baptism and Confirmation in the Episcopal, and of other or additional ones adopted by other branches of the Church, may be vindicated. But that **THE MODE** of *a form*, that mode being so indistinctly described in *the Law Book* as to admit of disputation, should be essential to salvation, to admittance into the Church Triumphant, is an ethical principle, which I never had the mental or moral capacity either to comprehend or appreciate. It is a doctrine so utterly repugnant

to my ideas of common sense and common justice, that I never deemed it worthy of more than a cursory examination.

As the Baptist Church occupies the fourth place, it follows that the Presbyterian comes third, on the list of my preferences. The clergy of this church possess as much, and probably more learning than the Episcopal, and are as free from the trammels of service-forms as the Methodist. Occupying this medium position, it would not be unreasonable to presuppose that here pulpit-oratory attained perfection. This, however, is not the case. The eloquence of its ministers is always more or less chilled by the mannerism of "the schools." This mannerism is doubtless to some extent also the result of the rigidity of their doctrines. Another drawback upon the pleasure of attending their ministrations is their excessively long prayers with vain repetitions. It is mysterious that a body of conscientious, kind-hearted men should age after age habitually indulge in this prayerful prolixity to the torment of their brethren, and in direct violation of the unequivocal command of him, whom they wish others to obey. It is no less a mystery that the membership do not rebel against this impious infliction. Nevertheless, the only sermons worthy of special note, to which I have listened since my departure, were delivered by Presbyterian ministers.

One was a doctrinal sermon, and the most liberal I have ever heard from one of that denomination. I thought at one time the preacher was going to cast one of my pearls before the——ladies and gentlemen present. He however didn't quite succeed.

When a boy, I was fond of discussing predestination and

moral agency. Before ceasing to be one, I stopped the discussion in this way. The existence of a God, who is omniscient, is a fact, which can only be denied by an Atheist. No enlightened and sensible man would willingly worship a being of finite information. Foreknowledge is necessarily contained in Omniscience.

Man is also a free moral agent. This is not a subject for argument. It is a matter of consciousness. I am as conscious of my moral agency as I am of my own existence. If any man has not this consciousness, *perhaps he is a machine*.

These two facts, Foreknowledge and free agency, or moral responsibility, seem totally irreconcilable. They are irreconcilable by human intellect. But it does not follow, because a finite mind cannot comprehend their compatibility, that the facts are not true. Much less does it follow, that because man has not sense enough to understand how it can be effected, that the ALL-WISE should be *incompetent* to devise a plan of moral responsibility for his creatures, *simply because He is ALL-WISE*.

At a later period of life I arrived at a second conclusion. This relates to the limitations, the boundaries of man's free agency. Upon this, as upon *other* subjects, there is an almost universal tendency to run into opposite extremes. At one time erroneous views concerning it came very near plunging me into bitterness, into misanthropy, into pharisaism.

The fact is, the territory of human freedom, and consequently of human accountability, is very limited, and no being, save the Omniscient, can define its shadowy boundaries. They are invisible to human eyes.

The proper understanding of this makes Charity easy, and reveals the wisdom of the command "Judge not."

For the sake of illustration I will state a case. I am not aware that I deliberately and intentionally violate any of the ten commandments. I am now ready and willing, when informed thereof, to make ample restitution to the utmost of my ability for every wrong, great or small, I have ever committed. You may say this is pharisaical. Admitting it to be so, I would rather be a Pharisee than a liar. But it is not so. Zaccheus said the same thing. Was Zaccheus a Pharisee? At any rate Christ not only did not reprove, but applauded him. Pharisaism consists in thinking yourself worthier than others. This self-complacency I do not indulge. You know one, bound to me by affection's ties, who violates deliberately almost every one of the commandments. Yet it is evident, even to us, that he makes occasional and violent efforts to reform. Now he is so constituted that he is *tempted* to do wrong. I am so constituted that I am *inclined* to do right, and the inclination becomes irresistible if the duty to be performed be either disagreeable or dangerous. The luxury of maintaining my own good opinion of myself is a stimulus to action, so strong as to make every trial seem pleasant. What is my duty, is with me the primary question. It is the never-ceasing cry of my soul. Thus you perceive that self-gratification *inclines* me to do what I think right, and *tempts* the person spoken of to do what he thinks wrong. Now will any human being have the presumption to assert, that his self-sacrifices, his struggles *to do no worse*, are not as great as mine



*to do right*, that I am worthy of greater rewards, that I am in the eye of our Judge *morally* better than he is?

While, therefore, I have no fear of being punished for doing well, I entertain a cheering hope that those, who in the economy of Providence have been so constituted, or so educated, as to be mean and miserable, but who have struggled earnestly, and to the extent of their capacity, against their meanness and misery, will be equally rewarded.

Thus you perceive that my doctrine is very humbling to human pride, removes bigotry, vanity, self-glorification, pharisaism, prevents the necessity for lying or whining, when an honest person speaks of himself, and opens the heart for the ingress of the angel Charity.

I am fully aware that I cannot see an inch before my nose, that I have been all my life walking generally in a dim twilight, and frequently in utter darkness, along the tortuous edges of precipitous and jagged precipices, that my own undirected, unaided efforts have been ever too feeble to save me for a moment. I am compelled by constitution to act from principles, and to follow them to their legitimate results. If I had been led by education into the wrong road, I should never have attempted to deceive myself. There would have been no "hemming and hawing." I should have been the calmest, the most determined of rascals. My primary question would have been, What villany will pay? A dishonest mother, a less judicious father, might have led or driven me into this miserable condition. Do I deserve any credit for having such parents? Did I make them?

Even as it is, I have stood upon the brink of a bitter, a



defiant, a scoffing stoicism. Looking back upon the devious and dangerous path over which I have been led by an invisible Hand, is it wonderful that standing still within the land of shadows, I should feel humble, grateful, fearless, joyful? Is it singular, that in the midst of gloomy circumstances, the gloom deepened by the "bad news" contained in your letter just received, my soul should be filled with that contentment of which humility, gratitude, courage, joy, faith are the constituent elements, and the possession of which has resulted from the judicious rewards and kind chastisements of my Heavenly Father.

I am afraid I have not made myself understood, but this letter, prolonged to an unusual length by an unusual amount of leisure, caused by waiting here "to head" a scoundrel, must be closed.

The other minister, of whom I designed speaking, had but little of the mannerism objected to, did not pray excessively long, and combined Presbyterian eloquence of style with Methodistical zeal of expression. His voice and gesticulation resembled those of that prince of stump speakers—the eloquent Haskell. But for his references to his manuscript I should have pronounced him a brilliant and effective orator.

He was very much afraid that people would think so much of Heaven, that they would forget Hell; that their attention would become so riveted upon the jasper walls, the crystal pavements, the pearly streams, the fruit upon the tree of Life, the gorgeous radiance of the beatific realm, and on the mercy of Him, whose presence is its light, that they would forget His justice, forget the worm that gnaws for ever, the pit of

eternal vengeance, the sea of fire that is never quenched, upon whose sulphurous waves, not only the wilful sinner, but the blind that cannot read, the deaf that cannot hear, the lame and helpless that cannot climb upon the platform of orthodoxy, will toss, and writhe, and shriek through the interminable annals of an agonizing eternity.

The fact of my inability to mount the platform did not prevent me from enjoying the writhings of the shipwrecked mariners, and the scenery which surrounded them. A beautiful fancy sketch well expressed and well acted always delights me.

It is almost needless to remind you, that I believe in sustaining not only every church, but every society not evidently immoral. They all doubtless do vastly more good than harm. Upon this, however, I have not time to expatiate. Neither have I time to tell you why there is so much, and no more religion in the Episcopal Church; nor how it is that a weak Methodist can believe himself to be a sincere Christian to-day, perpetrate some deliberate sin to-night, and be truly converted in his own estimation to-morrow, having at the same time an indistinct prescience that he will sin again the succeeding night, and be again converted the ensuing day; nor why it is that a Presbyterian, who is a rascal, is the calmest, the most deliberate, the most polished, the most systematic, the deepest, the shrewdest, the vilest, the hardest to catch and convict, of all hypocrites; nor why the Pages, the Knotts, the Grays, the Millikins, the Graces, the honest sensible preachers and privates of all branches of *The Church*, Roman Catholic included, resemble so much not only each other, but the honest and sensible men of *the world*.

And now this long correspondence ends. In a few days, too, will terminate this common-place tour; a tour extending through twelve months, yet checkered by no singular or startling event. Still it has been very pleasant to me; and my chief pleasure has consisted in attempting to make it pleasant to you.

Have my efforts been successful? Have the trivial incidents related, my own misdemeanors, my dry jokes, my surface criticisms, interested or amused you? Have my unconnected thoughts—garbled extracts from my system of theology—cheered you amid the labours, the responsibilities caused by my absence—labours and responsibilities uncongenial and oppressive to one so delicate and so sensitive as yourself? Have these thoughts hurriedly written, these extracts rapidly transcribed from the heart, contained any sentiments calculated to lead you, or through you the little ones, astray? For myself I can take calmly any necessary risk, but the responsibility of thinking for the young should make an intellectual giant tremble.

I hope I have taught nothing dangerously erroneous, nothing incompatible with the command “Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling;” or, as I would interpret it, with docility and caution. *The kernel of all I have designed to teach* is, that the creature and the Creator are under reciprocal obligations; that if man does his part God will do his; that if the former, in an humble, persevering, energetic, honest struggle after truth, is led into error, the latter will bring him into the right way, before that error leads him into an inextricable moral dilemma; and that no human being need

be miserable, need fear anything in the Heaven above, or the Hell beneath, who can *honestly* say, "I am habitually trying to do my best."

It may be well for one, whose mind acts as rapidly and as decisively as yours, to remember that I never finish studying any debateable question; that I am always balancing probabilities, and however firmly I may act, or however much I may risk upon an opinion, I am ever and anon reviewing my premises, re-examining the logic that led to my conclusion, and constantly watching for new rays of light.

AMERICUS, Geo., September 8.

And now for home, sweet home, attended and tilled by hirelings, whose affectionate obedience excites my esteem and gratitude, surrounded by kind, agreeable, and beloved neighbours, blessed with the principal advantages of the city and with all the quietude, the pleasantness, the purity, the freedom of the country. I see it now through the shortening vista, with its white house amid the tall oaks upon the hill.

It is not, however, upon the homestead that my thoughts love to linger. It would be delightful, it would add greatly to the pleasure of my return, to regard it as a fixed residence, a place at which to rear our children, and to which, wherever they roamed, their memories would reverently point as the play-ground of their youth, the home of Ma and Pa.

But this can not be. You say "sell;" my judgment says "sell;" and necessity, looming up in the distance, repeats the mandate.

It is not, therefore, a home of houses and land on which



my thoughts fondly dwell; but the home of wife and children. My heart yearns for, yet timidly shrinks from, the ecstacy, the crisis of the meeting. Some calamity may have befallen me—one of you may not be there to rejoice at my arrival.

It is the 20th of September, or thereabouts. A traveller walks up the hill, towards the white house amid the tall oaks. The negroes smilingly exclaim: "Yonder's Marse William;" the fleet, the affectionate, the enthusiastic Alice—the first born; too old to be praised, but not the less beloved, rushes into the wanderer's embrace. The lovely little Anna follows; and, while she sits on one arm, and the timid-looking, half-forgetful Nellie on the other, the lips of mother and father, husband and wife, have a delicious, a joyous meeting.

Yours,

WILLIAM ATSON.



AMONG the manuscripts of our author, is a small volume, written partly by pen and partly by pencil, styled "A Book of Thoughts and Talk."

A few extracts from it will be found in the Appendix. One of the more recently written of these is so appropriate a finale to the preceding letters, that the writer thinks it best to insert it here.

October 5, 1856, BOTHWELL.

At home, wife and children well and around me.

I have never heard any music equal to the warbling of Jenny Lind, save the artless prattle of a sweet-voiced child.



If the sweet-voiced child be beautiful as a cherub, the vision and the tones would move any heart not palsied by the icy influence of selfishness.

I am looking at, and listening to, such a one now. She is running around—she is climbing about me—she is in my lap—the golden hair dishevelled—the jetty eyebrows and eyelashes contrasting beautifully with the light locks and the fair rose-tinted complexion—the large, dark blue eyes, brightly beaming—the face iridescent with smiles—the tongue incessantly prattling inconceivable music. Another little one has joined in the sport. She is somewhat older, with eyes as bright, and hair and complexion of slightly darker hue—the beauty of baby ways, and the melody of baby tones, still lingering about her. Both are tormenting me as I write. I am sometimes half provoked; but the bright glances, the persuasive ways, and the music tones manacle me with a strange, sweet spell. I am helpless—I cannot drive the tiny tormentors away. I cannot terminate the delicious annoyance. “Mother,” “sister,” will you not come to my relief? Will you not coax them from me?

FINIS.

EXTRACTS

FROM

“A BOOK OF THOUGHTS AND TALK.”

BY WILLIAM ATSON.



## EXTRACTS

FROM

“A BOOK OF THOUGHTS AND TALK.”

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### THE HEIGHT OF INCONSISTENCY.

To pay for your sisters, daughters, wives, to see indelicate acts, and hear indelicate remarks; and then object to the Rev. J. L. Chapman's book, “Fashion and Consequence,” because it draws faint pictures of these things.

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### A QUESTION ABOUT THE SEXES.

A MAN, not wholly depraved, would blush to see a fellow-man expose his person in the presence of woman. How is it, then, that women do not blush at mimic exposures of themselves by proxy, in the presence of staring gentlemen?

## ANSWER TO THE FOREGOING QUERY. .

THE reason is, that woman is purer than man. Man is an active, woman is a passive being. Unless previously corrupted, neither waltzing, nor improper theatrical, nor any other moderately objectionable exhibitions, excite impure emotions within her. She will attach no indelicate ideas to them.

The fact, however, that Chapman, a preacher, and Byron, who was not very pious, as well as some other sensible men, who belong to neither of these classes, do regard these things as indelicate, is, it seems to me, sufficient to prevent modest women from participating in, or encouraging them; and to cause mothers, fathers, brothers, to say to their unsuspecting daughters and sisters: "It is unnecessary to waltz, or to walk away up to the theatre in company with a young gentleman, to see one of your sex expose herself. Some people think it immodest. It may or it may not be; but unless duty absolutely demands the sacrifice, young ladies should avoid *even the appearance* of immodesty."

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## ADVERTISEMENT.

THE Rev. Thomas Vanity, D.D., Author, &c., will preach a discourse on next Sabbath, at 11 o'clock, A. M., at Blank Church, "on Astronomy," "The Locality of Heaven and Hell," "Slavery," or some such outré and interesting subject.

The Reverend Doctor will be particularly pleased to see



the sophomoric portion of the community—those who think they know, but do not; as it will be easy for the well informed to perceive that the dull and silly parts of the discourse are original; and that the startling facts, the new developments, the peculiar constructions, the eloquent flights, are old and plagiarized.



### TALKING IS NOT ARGUING.

A GLIB talker will frequently perplex a man of good information and fixed principles; and advocate a bad cause or a wrong idea successfully, with ignorant or unreflecting auditors, by the multiplicity of his plausible arguments and apparently appropriately applied facts and quotations. Such a talker will *writhe* and leave, if you obstinately, but good-humouredly hold him to the point in dispute.

I was travelling on a steamboat with Governor J., of N., who conversed fluently and pleasantly. He was an old politician, and his face was consequently hard. I let him talk for a day and a half on his favourite topic. All this time I appeared very modest, acting as a sort of Know-Nothing, and merely asking a question for information once in a while. At length, thinking it best to halter him, I said: “Governor, all you have said sounds very well. It may, or it may not, be true; but admitting it to be so, it does not seem to me to prove what you are attempting to prove.” From that moment I held him to the disputed point. Old hard-face coloured—the crowd smiled—the debate ended.

"THE London Times says Turkey is *a sick man*."

"We rather think it is *a sick Turkey*."

The London Times made the remark attributed to it about *three years ago*. The editor of "The Commercial" made the above comment upon it *just five days ago*.

A wealthy and enterprising Western gentleman of my acquaintance, who did not learn how to spell when young, went out hunting, after arriving at years of maturity, and got lost; his clothes, I suppose, torn by the briars, and his face and hands scratched. On being questioned about his delay and condition, he replied: "I got into a *preliminary*, from which I found it difficult to *obstruct* myself."

A witty young friend related this in the presence of some young ladies—the father of one of them being in the room. The young folks laughed, and proceeded to chit-chat on other subjects. At the expiration of half an hour they were interrupted by the old gentleman, who had been in a "brown-study" all the time, exclaiming: "It's very strange Mr. Watson couldn't think of the word *extricate*."

Now, if Mr. Walter's intellect was considered a slow coach for taking only thirty minutes to think of a three-syllable word, what must we think of the intellectual speed of the editor of "The Commercial," who has taken three years to remember and connect two words, both combined, containing only a trio of syllables?

### A MINISTER CAN BE SAVED.

I BELIEVE it possible for a minister of the gospel to be saved. Though, after he “gets the hang” of preaching, the allied powers, Love of Ease, Self-Indulgence, Self-Complacency, Vanity, and Bigotry, separately or combined, according to the resistance expected, are apt to creep into the outer bulwarks of his soul, narcotize it, excite pleasant dreams of personal holiness, make his eyes a fountain of tears for erring neighbours, and, while he is thus sleeping, and dreaming, and shedding tears of sympathy, take the entire fortress, and softly bind him hand and foot with chains of adamant, covered with silk, and keep him a prisoner till death comes and casts him into outer darkness.



### ADVICE TO A YOUNG BRIDEGROOM.

ADHERE to your marriage vow, young bridegroom, if you wish to be happy. “Keep yourself only unto” your young bride; and, though not chaste, you will become so in act and in heart. Love her, cherish her, provide for her reasonable wants, make personal sacrifices to render her at least as comfortable as yourself, and you will find your soul expanding, Selfishness yielding, Benevolence and Charity coming in. Children smiling, lisping, prattling, playing around your knees, calling you pa, and trusting you for daily bread, will hasten the departure of the evil, and the ingress of the good. If you don’t “look sharp” you will be *regenerated*. If you

don't take care, *you will be happy*. Run from home to the theatre, the billiard-room, the club, or some other such place, or you will be caught in one or both of these "snaps."

Preachers are good in their place, and some of them have, doubtless, been "called;" but women and children are God's *created* missionaries to man.



### C., ALABAMA.

I NEVER stopped here before; yet this village is haunted by images that were engraved upon my boyish fancy.

A cousin, the namesake and playmate of my father, once resided here. He travelled from home, retired to bed at the usual hour without uttering a complaint, and was found, the next morning, lying placidly in the cold composure of death.

Once sparkled here a beautiful, intelligent, and wealthy girl, and a young and accomplished physician. The girl was fascinating, lively, imprudent, perhaps guilty. The physician took, or was supposed to have taken, advantage of her unsuspecting confidence. Suspicion cast a shadow upon her character. She ceased to be a belle, and married a poor and lazy man, who taught me "Caesar."

The white garments of the bride were soon exchanged for Death's snowy vestments. My old teacher, the husband of a month, died a few years ago. The doctor still stands high for intellectual ability, but for nothing else. He has his reward; having descended through dishonour and dissipation into an old age of odious inefficiency and unaspiring misery.

## THE WAY GOD TEACHES SCHOOL.

PREACHERS in their ministrations are prone to forget the present, and to direct the attention of the people too exclusively to the contemplation of future rewards and punishments. The folly of this may be illustrated by a remark of my little Alice. When two or three years old, she committed some trivial peccadillo in the presence of Miss Ann, an amiable, intelligent, and beloved orphan ward of mine, and said, "Please don't tell pa." Miss Ann remarked, "Suppose I do not tell your pa, God knows it." "Oh," replied Alice, "I don't care anything about that—He won't tell on me." Now the great majority of men and women are nothing but grown-up children. They do not reflect or reason; and if you skip the actual present in your arguments, if you do not hold up right before them the reward and the punishment, the candy in one hand, and the switch in the other, slow will be your progress in teaching them the practice of good.

This is the principle upon which God conducts his school, both in the moral and physical department.



## FLOGGING.

DON'T suppose from what I have said that I believe in much punishment. One who punishes judiciously, wisely blending explanations, reasonings, firmness, and affection, will not have to punish often or severely. A frequent resort to the rod indi-



cates unskilful management. A little firmness and a great deal of affection will conquer the worst child or the worst slave. The admixture recommended, properly administered, is invincible.

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### THE LITTLE GIRLS—GOD BLESS THEM.

TELLING the preceding anecdote of Alice, reminds of an impromptu sermon by Doctor Booth's little Anna, which embodies in one sentence all that can be sensibly said in demonstration of the possibility of the resurrection.

When not quite three years old she swallowed a dime, and on being asked if she was not afraid it would kill her, replied, "What if it does? *God made me, and he can make me again.*"

Relating this instance of childish sprightliness, evokes the image of the thinly-clad, pale-faced, shivering, sweet little New York girl, who, unused to kindness, looked up into the benevolent countenance of her lovely benefactress, and said, "*Are you God's wife?*"

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### SCEPTICAL.

YOU are sceptical, are you? So am I. Let us, however, keep the ten commandments. That will not hurt us, no matter what theory death proves to be correct.

Though materialism be true, and our souls be destined to inherit only annihilation, still it is pleasant while the heart beats to let it beat with holy emotions, and whilst the brain

paints, to let it paint a picture radiant with the hues of an imaginary immortality; and in the midst of the radiance high over all, a GOOD and ALMIGHTY FRIEND, connected to angels human and heavenly; and to us humble loiterers in this dark valley by a spiritual girdle composed of Faith, and Love, and Hope.



# BROOKS AND SUMNER. A PRESCRIPTION FOR DIS- UNIONISTS.\*

IT is difficult to suppose that a man of well balanced mind would think it wise to defend *a state with* HIS CANE, which could be defended *by its* history. Nor would a man of this kind be apt to conclude that public opinion required a nephew to cane a man for insulting an uncle by words used in legislative debate, especially when the character of the uncle not only for chivalrous integrity, but for ability to defend himself, either by pistol or tongue, was established by a career of threescore years.

To the caning, abstractly considered, I do not object. If it were administered, not for the purpose of inflicting physical injury, but merely as chastisement to a pitiable coward, who took advantage of parliamentary privileges to spue his venom upon the fair fame of an absent and aged gentleman, and would neither retract, apologize, or fight, though, deeming the deed unnecessary to the character of the nephew, I should regard it as praiseworthy—or at least as indicating an impulsive soul whose faults leaned to virtue's side.

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\* Written prior to the death of Brooks.

If the attack was unfair, and the blows were really inflicted without fair warning, and with injurious force, upon the head of the offending Senator whilst sitting in a helpless position, then the nephew acted the part of a cowardly and malicious wretch, whose conduct should be condemned by every man in whose heart the feeblest germ of magnanimity exists.

From the lights before me, I am inclined to put the more favourable construction upon the performance of Brooks in the first act of *The Gutta Percha Comedy*. The fact of its transpiring in the Senate Chamber, the Senate not being in session, will do to gammon the ignorant and gullible with, but does not affect the merits of the case.

The performance of Brooks in the second act of the comedy is more difficult to comprehend. This star actor had presented himself before his audience—the nation—as a fighting man; a man so sensitive to insult as to volunteer to cane a fellow-man for insulting his state and his uncle—the excuse for the caning being that the party caned would not accept a challenge or resist an attack.

Senator Wilson, after this, deliberately and grossly insults our sensitive and spunky hero, and refuses, upon being challenged, to fight a duel, but intimates that an attack upon his person will be *martially* responded to. Our hero does not *cane* this wordy warrior. This kind of consistency is too deep for me.

It may be replied that Wilson was armed, and would have had every legal advantage of Brooks; that he might have shot him down with impunity on the least appearance of an attack. Did Brooks attack Sumner because the latter was unprepared?

Or because he believed he incurred no risk by doing so? If not, why so cautious when a goading personal insult tempted him to attack Wilson?

A clear head could easily have devised, and a brave heart could easily have executed, a plan to rob this more ferocious Senator of his legal advantages. How easy for such a one to have approached the man with the shooting-cane, and pleasantly said to him, in the presence of witnesses, “You are, I presume, under the impression that I design attacking you with ‘Gutta Percha,’ or some other dangerous weapon. Your apprehensions are entirely erroneous. I assure you, my dear sir, that I have no idea of endangering your life, or inflicting any serious physical injury upon you. I merely intend to spit in your face, or pull your nose, or both”—doing one or both while speaking, and being prepared to act according to the action of the party then and thus insulted. In this, or some similar way, I think Brooks might have degraded Wilson, or gotten up a fair fight—have saved himself from the charge of extra caution after having exhibited extra rashness, as well as from all imputations upon his courage, even though he might afterwards have evinced more discretion than valour in declining to fight in Canada the only man who performed the farce of accepting one of his challenges. Thus, too, our actor might have ended the second act in the comedy with credit to himself and his native South.

The defenders of Brooks say, he is personally brave, but that his conduct was regulated by political and party considerations. His policy and partyism were, however, too profound for my comprehension.

I can easily understand how a weak man could be so crazed by the eclat of caning a sitting Senator ; that eclat being occasioned not by the intrinsic merit of the deed, but by the position of the parties and the peculiarity of a political crisis, as to think, and thinking to declare, that one blow from his hand would have dissolved the Union.

I can even conceive of a man silly enough thus to think and speak, who nevertheless possessed a sufficiency of patriotism and moral courage to withhold the fatal blow.

But for a traitorous or fanatical ultraist, who avowedly desires a dissolution of the Union, to give the preservation of that Union as the reason for his forbearance, is as yet incomprehensible to me. Perhaps I may solve the problem before completing my work on "The Psychology of Creation."

Combining my conversation with Brooks's friends in South Carolina, with the published history of his personal difficulties, I am inclined to think he is a clever fellow, *moderately* honest, generous, and brave ; who is governed more by the advice of acquaintances, the force of immediately surrounding circumstances, and his guesses at what public opinion may be, than by the dictates of his own heart—in short, that his mind was either never very strong or has been weakened by education and vanity.

The suspicion thus aroused relative to his intellectual imbecility, is confirmed, admitting him not to be a malicious traitor, by his disunionism. No sensible and truthful man will affirm that there has been as yet a moral or political necessity for a dissolution of the Union.

Every honest man, capable of considering both sides of a



question, will admit that disunion in advance of such a necessity is a disaster to be greatly dreaded. It follows, therefore, that all the present advocates of disunion, who are not deliberately traitorous, belong to the narrow-minded, one-ideaed tribe. To Brooks, and all other members of it, I would, as a physician, kindly prescribe—

“There is, my friends, in every one of you, an inherent tendency to monomania. Pour cold water on your fanaticism, by reading conservative works and attempting to think conservative thoughts. By pursuing this course you may be useful to your family, and escape the lunatic asylum. If, however, the one-ideaism begins to take possession of you, and you find mischief brewing in your soul, concentrate your mind upon some minor arson. Do not apply the torch of treason to this great temple of human liberty.”



### PAULINE.

EXTRACT ending a business letter to one whose grief for the loss of a daughter, just budding into womanhood, seemed inconsolable :—

“My views of life do not prevent me from sympathizing with the sorrows of the living, and the reason why I deem it *selfish* to *regret* the death of those who die young, are so truthfully and beautifully suggested in the following verse, I have concluded to transcribe it, hoping it may mitigate your sorrow by causing you to regard death not as the enemy, but as the friend of your lovely and beloved Pauline.

“And she was young, and fair, and bright,  
Her heart all joy, her hopes all light,  
With laughter in her glancing eyes,  
Her speech all jest and pleasantries.  
Sorrow as yet no gloom had flung  
O'er her young brow—unstirred still hung  
The spangled vail, through which gay youth  
Looks out upon the field of truth.  
Care had not yet displaced one fold,  
The future's history was untold.’

“Pleasant should be the melancholy of him who sees a loved one exchange earth for heaven, *just before* reality begins to strangle in its icy grasp the imaginings and hopes of the young and pure heart.

Your friend,

W. ATSON.”

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MERCY and Justice are not two separate attributes. The former is an essential constituent of the latter. Justice being nothing more nor less than Mercy judiciously or wisely administered.

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#### A GEORGIA LAWYER.

COL. G., an experienced lawyer of high standing, resides here. He is a member of the ——— Church, and possesses the confidence of the entire community, so far as I know, both in regard to his piety and legal ability. I employed him as counsel for Smith & Co. To commence the suit, required the giving of a bond for twenty-five hundred dollars, as security

for costs, these costs not to exceed twenty-five dollars, and to be paid by Smith only, in case they could not be recovered from the defendants.

I said to the colonel, "Neither I nor the house of Smith & Co. know any one here upon whom we have the least claim. It seems to me, as we are strangers, and employing you, you might risk signing such a bond for a house you know to be wealthy and respectable. To prevent, however, the least possibility of loss, I will deposit the twenty-five dollars with you."

He remarked, that, before "coming of age," he had resolved never to sign any paper of the kind, and could not, without violating principles upon which he had been acting all his life, subscribe his name to this one.

Having made up my mind to employ another attorney, I was indifferent about his accommodating me, but just in the way of an indignant protest replied,

"You admit there is not the possibility of loss, that there is no risk; and yet you would allow a fellow-man, simply because he is a stranger, to lose twelve hundred dollars, rather than take a nominal risk for twenty-five dollars, the amount risked being deposited in your own hands as security."

"Yes," said he, "you state the case correctly, but I cannot do what you desire without departing from my principles."

"Then, sir," I remarked, "permit me to say you have very bad principles. I am a close, prudent, business man. I have a family, I know what poverty is, but I tell you, candidly and considerately, I would rather break a thousand times than act upon such principles."

The Colonel astonished me by instantly replying, "I'll sign the bond." My astonishment originated not only from the fact that my tone was not persuasive, but also from the consideration that this gentleman was a man of unusual firmness and force of character. The result only proves or rather strengthens the opinion elsewhere expressed, that men do not generally design to deceive others, but *deceive themselves* into error. Make them *realize* exactly their position, and if erroneous there are but few who will not rectify it.

Had I withheld a candid expression of my sentiments, I should have bid farewell to the Colonel, under the abiding conviction that he was a cold-blooded scoundrel. I saw a good deal of him after our interview, and now believe him to have a warm, honest heart, cloaked by a stern and chilling aspect.



#### A TALK ABOUT FIGHTING. BE PEACEABLE IF YOU CAN—FIGHT IF YOU MUST.

WHILST the self-conceited and silly are always blundering, and always defending themselves—rarely perceiving and never acknowledging their errors—the sensitive, conscientious, and sensible are ever acknowledging their misdeeds, and bemoaning their inconsistencies.

The first of the preceding statements is explained by its own terms. The second is solved by a consideration of the fact that the humble and the good frequently do believe and teach one thing, and practise another. They act thus because their theory of right is wrong. When they depart from their theory

under the pressure or the light of circumstances, instead of re-examining it, they acknowledge they have erred, and continue repeating their acknowledgments and infractions,—the original infractions and the subsequent repetitions being produced not by a disposition to do wrong, but by their common sense and their sense of duty to themselves, being illumined at the moment by the light of their peculiar position. These persons forget that there is no general rule without an exception.

Murder is sinful, and, except the crime of unchastity in woman, is the greatest of crimes. Yet murder is not always a crime. It is sometimes commendable. There are some crimes the law cannot reach. To appeal to the law for redress in relation to them is disgraceful. Where this is clearly the case, I understand the great Organizer of society, by this apparent oversight, to have said to the injured, “I throw upon you the responsibility of obtaining restitution for yourself.” Based upon this view of the subject, is the belief that the husband, the father, the brother, the son ought to kill coolly, deliberately, and good-humouredly, without giving him the least chance of self-defence, the man, who unjustly defames his wife, daughter, sister, mother, and will not retract the defamatory charge, so completely, frankly, and publicly, as to reinstate them in their original unimpeached condition.

For an honourable, sensitive, and brave man to do such a deed simply from a sense of duty to the sex and society, would require great moral courage.

Notwithstanding my belief in its propriety, deliberately formed without any occurrence, past, present, or prospective



to excite me, I should be tempted to give the slanderer a chance for his life, by equally risking my own. To yield to the temptation would be wrong.

Such an act should be performed after due reflection, without the stimulus of anger or revenge. Nor should it be perpetrated merely to vindicate or restore the character of the traduced person, which it has very little tendency to affect. If performed at all, it should be performed simply as an act of duty, to teach the world the holiness of chastity—the peculiar sanctity of woman's fair fame; and to warn the deliberate slanderer or the careless talker that he must calculate before speaking, whether the pleasure of reporting evil is equal to the pain of risking the forfeit of his life. The above is an extreme case. The defence of one's character should be conducted on somewhat similar principles. At least no passion, no revenge should characterize self-defence. Each one should calmly teach the fact, whenever opportunity offers, that his moral standing cannot be assailed with impunity. The idea that spitting in the face, cowhiding, tapping with a cane, are gross insults, the failure to avenge which stamps the insulted with hopeless ignominy, whilst the pitiable being, who calmly receives the grossest attacks upon his moral character, deserves praise, is perfectly ridiculous. This doctrine is worthy of the silliest age of the world. It teaches our children to place the physical above the moral, to *overestimate* THE LICK, to *underrate* THE LIE. It would, but that the heart of the generous and noble instinctively rebels against it, undermine the chivalry, and eradicate the courage of the race.

Duelling is not in and of itself sinful. It may, under some

circumstances, be not only not sinful, but absolutely essential to the interests of society. Let public opinion, which has been invoked for centuries, yield to the invocations of the unthinking or timid, and invariably fix a stain upon the escutcheon of him who resents an insult to his family or himself, and in three generations the Union will become a nation not only of slanderers, but of adulterers, rogues, and cowards. The propriety or impropriety of fighting depends on the peculiar circumstances of each case. The pugnacious party cannot escape the responsibility of his act. An error resulting in blood, though invisible to the most scrutinizing spectator or skilful attorney, will torment its perpetrator forever. Its ghostly aspect will haunt him always.

To decide upon the offence to the public, and to counteract the efforts of the mean and malicious to simulate for rascally purposes the feelings of the generous and brave, a jury of twelve fellow-citizens, though liable to err, is the best possible tribunal. "*The code of honour,*" in duelling books, should never be followed one iota farther than it accords with the code of honour in the heart. Some of the regulations of the former are very silly. For instance, I, as a second, must fight a man to whom I am not inimical, because he thinks my principal is not, and that I am, a gentleman.

In such a case, if the principal be a gentleman, and not a coward, his heart would tell him to break through all artificial restraints, and say to his second, "You shall not fight my battles; I will make my enemy retract or fight, or I'll degrade him by some gross insult."

Again, a man insults me, and cannot be induced to make

the "amende honorable." I call him to account. He chooses weapons or a mode of fighting to which I am not accustomed, thereby increasing the chances, after having injured my character, of destroying my life without equally risking his own. The duelling code would require me to accede to the terms however unfair. In such a case, I think the challenger should denounce his adversary's plan as unjust and cowardly; and propose weapons and a mode of warfare equally or more dangerous, which would be undoubtedly fair to both. In this proposition the farce of little pistols at ten steps should be guarded against, as well as any arrangement which would necessarily involve the crime of suicide—as applying a match to a keg of powder, or a breast to breast fire-arm fight.

Again, duelling is regarded as a test of courage, and yet no provision has been instituted to render the test a fair one.

One man takes his position on the duelling ground without the aid of artificial stimuli to sustain his nerves. He is calm and fearless. The other appears equally brave, but his senses are benumbed by a narcotic, or his hopes excited or his fears allayed by alcohol.

The former faces the danger with a clear perception of all the disagreeable consequences which can possibly result therefrom correctly daguerreotyped upon his mind. The views of the other are distorted. He is partially deranged—and either perceives no danger, or foresees no disagreeable sequences resulting from it, or is temporarily reckless of them.

One of these men is honest, for no man, but the most hardened of villains, could thus fight without being honest, and

reposes grandly upon his faith and his courage. The other may be a scoundrel, whose courage is only bolstered up by vanity and liquor. And yet the duelling code and public opinion place them on an equality.

From these considerations I educe the following conclusion. A sober and sensible man should not be required to meet on the field of honour one who is drunk, deranged, or reckless. Therefore the former should have the privilege of saying, either when challenging or being challenged, "I will meet you provided it be agreed that, just before proceeding to fight, each of us shall swear on the Holy Evangelists, that he has not, for a week previously, imbibed any opiate, or alcoholic stimulant, that he has taken nothing within that period which could stupify or intoxicate, in short, nothing stronger than coffee."

These are some of the weak points in the duelling code. Its strong point is that if men must fight, they had better fight deliberately and fairly, than resort to accidental street encounters, where there is no system, but little fairness, and the lives of bystanders are endangered. Though I regard personal fights as sometimes right, I do not forget that a conscientious man, not averse to duelling, might be surrounded by circumstances which would justify him in declining a challenge. The absolute dependence of a helpless family upon his daily labour, or the necessity of trying to preserve his life in order to pay debts already contracted, might afford grounds of justification for such an act. This gives cowards a chance to whine and lie out of a fight, but the community can generally discriminate between the cowardly and mean and the honest and brave. And even if it could not, the man, who



could calmly bear, for a good cause, the undeserved imputation of cowardice, should be very happy in contemplating the sublimity of his own courage, and the ease with which he could convince the world of its existence should a change of circumstances render the exhibition of it accordant with his sense of right and justice.

This abstruse subject is a source of great perplexity to parents. If they say to their children, "Never take an insult," the latter may become resentful, reckless, or fussy. If they say "Don't fight, I'll whip you," the little ones may become weakly amiable, or cowardly.

The subject is easily simplified.

First. Teach your children, both girls and boys, to be afraid of nothing in God's universe but moral error. Begin this lesson as soon as they can walk. The first thing of which they are afraid is "the dark." Under some pretence or other coax or bribe them into the habit of going into it by themselves. Dismiss or whip the nurse if she permits ghost stories to be told in their hearing. Although it will be proper for you to familiarize them with the term ghost, to comment on the improbability of their ever appearing, and the ridiculousness, even though one should appear, of being afraid of a thing that never did hurt any person, and which, at the worst, only reminds the bad of their bad deeds, or forewarns the good of approaching evil. Not only so; take every opportunity to put in safe practice, and try by judicious tests the moral and physical courage of the little soldiers whose lives are to be one uninterrupted battle. Impress them also with an abiding conviction of the misery and meanness of cowardice, and the



happiness, glory, and power of true courage. Neglect not to teach them well what this latter quality is. Teach them that cowards may fight fearlessly and die gloriously in the hubbub of battle. Teach them that true courage consists in the ability to refrain from the commission of wrong irrespective of consequences, and *calmly, deliberately, alone, without the excitement or aid of artificial stimuli*, or adventitious circumstances, to do right all the time, and in the midst of the most frightful, the most heart-rending contingencies, with their eyes firmly riveted upon and clearly perceiving all the dangerous and disagreeable consequences which may possibly result from the act.

Teach them that sometimes it would be cowardly to fight and brave to “back out;” that in fact a brave man is the only sort of man who can “back out” bravely or gracefully.

This part of a child’s education should be nearly completed by the time he is old enough to start to school.

Secondly. Teach your children that it is their duty to exert themselves to the utmost limit compatible with honour to live peaceably. That war should ever be a *dernier resort*.

Thirdly. Teach them to give liberally, and to exact nothing in return but respect.

Fourthly. Teach them that fighting from anger, malice, or revenge, is always wrong, and can never, under any circumstances, be right, the actuating principle, the motive, being sinful in and of itself.

Fifthly, and finally. Teach them not only to respect you as a parent, but to love and confide in you as a companion. They will then make you their confidants, and tell you the story of their tiny battles and their tiny trials. In this way you will

learn their views, and can rectify the mistakes of the little blunderers, as they err in attempting to practise your apparently conflicting precepts.

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### MACAULAY. THE TWO KINGS. CATHOLICISM.

It is strange that Macaulay, in his luminous exposition of the characters of Charles and James, should have failed to perceive, or perceiving should have omitted to tell, why these depraved monarchs clung with such tenacity to the Roman Catholic faith.

Too weak to break the fetters of habitual vice, and too cowardly to walk unaided by hope in the pathway of crime, their only escape from the dread of future punishment was a resort to confession and priestly absolution. This was a more facile way of salvation than reformation.

Under the influence of the illusory hopes it inspired, Charles could indulge with complacency his polished selfishness, and participate, without forebodings of evil, in his fascinating amours.

On his death-bed, he became unhappy. The priest ascended the secret staircase, upon and down which the frail fair had been accustomed to glide, and whispered absolution in his ear. After this the king was calm, happy, brave, and pleasantly apologized to his nurses for taking so long to die, though the vices of perjury, adultery, and the progeny of social evils to which they give rise, still nestled in his heart or hovered about his couch.

In the same way, the same hope of redemption through confession and absolution cheered his brother, the ungodly James, through his long life of crime, unredeemed by a solitary virtue.

Is not the same doctrine of absolution, of forgiveness through the interposition of another without any moral effort on their part, or any metastasis in the moral status of their soul, the cause of the erratic career of many weak-minded Protestants? Is it certain that this dogma, concealed under different forms and clouded in a mist of different words, is not lodged in the hearts of as many Protestants as Catholics, the ratio of intelligence being considered?

Does not a large proportion of the Protestant world design to live as they list, and to repent and be converted just before they die? If the risk were not too great, would they not postpone confession, absolution, conversion, to the hour of death's approach, or at least till after they had made their wills?



## POPERY.

I HAVE been taught to regard Popery as Antichrist, stifling liberty, and crushing Christianity by keeping the minds of the masses darkened by ignorance. I have as yet learned nothing calculated to change this conviction. It is, however, evident that no system reposing on such a base can flourish in a country of free presses, free thinkers, and general intelligence.

My position about Popery is therefore this. If my prejudices against it are well founded, it cannot flourish here—the

atmosphere of established liberty will kill it. If they are without foundation, the lovers of freedom of conscience, should not object to giving it a fair chance.

Let us, therefore, fight the supposed monster; not, however, by foul means, or unfair laws, violative of our own most cherished principles, but with fireside instruction, with schools, with books, with the pen, and the press.

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### THE HUSBAND OF A FAST WOMAN.

YOU covet, cheat, lie, steal, break the Sabbath, and violate, item by item, the balance of the moral law, do you? Yes. You are not the submissive, smiling husband of a fast woman, are you? No sir-ree. Well, then, your case is not hopeless. There is a lower abysm of masculine degradation to which you have not yet descended. You are not, therefore, so low but that you may attempt to ascend.

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### DANCING, SWEARING, &c.

TEACH a child that dancing is as sinful as lying, and when he becomes old he may do both.

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### “CONFOUND.”

TEACH the young that it is as bad to say “confound” as to take the name of the Lord in vain, and they will swear like troopers when out of hearing.

## THE WAY TO RETAIN PARENTAL INFLUENCE.

THE best way to retain parental influence is to teach your child *the exact truth*, remembering that *truth is always sensible*.



## THE EFFECT OF SUCH TEACHING.

By pursuing affectionately this plan, the weird influences of parental instruction will extend beyond the rod-epoch, and be ever the starlight by which the child, through manhood's prime and life's decline, will attempt to find the right path in every hour of darkness and bewilderment.



## HOW TO SWEAR.

PERSONS of irascible or impetuous dispositions, have an innate and almost unconquerable proneness not only to vehement expression, but to the use of by-words. Resist this proclivity to the utmost of your ability; but, if it will speak out, do not let it take the name of the Lord in vain. Say “Dad drap it,” “Thunder and lightning,” “the Devil and all his angels,” or something of the sort.

Some pious people had as lief say “God” as “the Devil.” I never heard of the latter personage objecting to the irreverent use of his name. The Bible contains no command against it, and I am inclined to think, from my acquaintance with the old fellow, that he rather likes to be called on.



## MISS NELLIE ATSON.

MISS NELLIE, now nearly midway between the years of two and three, had been looking at the pictures in Harper, and listening to the reading of the remarks annexed to them. A few days afterwards, her mother said, "What do you intend doing when Pa sells out?" and was astonished by her promptly replying, partly in her own language, partly in the words of the book, "I am going to town; I ain't agoing to poke myself in the country."

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## LETTER OF INTRODUCTION.

Memphis, August 15, 1854.

Messrs. Smith & Co.

GENTLEMEN:—My friend, General T., visits your city on business. *Though a Congressman*, he is a trustworthy gentleman. Any attention you may show him will be duly appreciated by

Yours respectfully,

WILLIAM ATSON.

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## "THE WOMAN'S LAW."

NATURE designed, and Revelation elucidates and enforces with emphatic reiteration the idea and the command contained in this design, that the married pair should be ONE; that, to this end, *their interest should not be similar*, BUT THE SAME—the wife to be the purer, the better, but the comparatively

*passive* half of this unit; the husband the "go-ahead," worldly, out of doors, *active* half.

Anything calculated to change this position of the parties, must therefore be a sin against Nature and Revelation—cannot benefit the woman, and necessarily degrades the man.

An active woman generally becomes masculine in her feelings and manners. A woman with such feelings and manners is an object of disgust to the refined of the other sex. At least she loses the appearance of that feminine delicacy, which is the magic charm that excites in every true man a tender affection for every true woman, whose passing form he sees, whose softly-rustling garments, or light tread, he hears.

A passive man is an abortion. An active man, reduced to passivity, is a slave. If the slavery be the result of circumstances beyond his control, he may bear it with heroic stoicism; or fret away existence in struggling to break the bars of his cage. If it be inherited, he may be happy. But wilful slavery—slavery produced by the barter of one's own freedom, or any fault of the party enslaved, though the fetters be golden, and woman's fair hands keep the prison's keys—is a degraded and degrading position. And he who habitually and knowingly occupies such a position, if not originally mean, will inevitably become so.

"The Woman's Law" possesses this reversing tendency:

It destroys the *oneness* of the married pair.

It makes a partnership of marriage.

It renders woman active and masculine.

It emasculates and degrades man.

It teaches that woman should trust her body and her soul

to the custody of one, with whom she is afraid to trust her purse.

It makes money the prime object of marriage.

It tends to increase the mercenary spirit of the age.

The scuffles of man for a livelihood, renders almost all men mercenary; and would manacle them with Mammon's frigid fetters, were it not for *the home, the wifely* influence.

"The Woman's Law" *tends* to undermine this influence. It will make the wife mercenary. A mercenary wife will be a mercenary mother. A mercenary mother will rear mercenary children. Mercenary children will after a while constitute a mercenary society; *and a thoroughly mammonized Society contains within its bosom fewer living seeds of good, and inspires less hope of redemption than any other social organization.*

"The Woman's Law" is popular with some good men, because they regard it as a chivalrous restriction of their rights and privileges, for the benefit of the weaker sex.

Every one who has read my writings, and is capable of comprehending my character, knows when *man's* interests and feelings clash with those of women and children, I would pay no more attention to the former than to those of a rhinoceros.

My opposition to this law is, therefore, based upon the belief, that it does not benefit these more helpless classes.

The fact that it tends to unwomanize woman, and mammonize society, establishes the correctness of this opinion.

But to descend to a more commonplace view of the subject. *This law will not benefit the fair sex, or the orphan-child, in the mere matter of property.*

Any tolerable husband of a good wife can induce her to sign any business paper, the signature of which he may deem important to his interests.

No good wife would, through fear of pecuniary loss—that fear being suggested merely by her own fancy or judgment—in such a case act in direct opposition to the heartfelt wishes and earnest entreaties of a husband whom she loved and respected. Rather than deliberately and practically say to such a husband, "I have no respect for you, I think I understand the pecuniary interests of our family better than you," *the affectionate, womanly* wife, would not only act counter to the timid whispers of her own unpractised judgment, but fearlessly face the certainty of pecuniary loss.

The commercial result of this law in practice is, therefore, as follows :—

If the husband desires to enter into any selfish scheme—into dissipation, extravagance, speculation—the good wife's purse is almost always accessible.

If he desires her signature, her hand is almost always ready to do his bidding.

Thus she is ever liable to lose her property, and the Law in her case is rendered null and void. When, however, one of these *overseer husbands—one of these legal underlings of the wife*, WHO IS NOT EXACTLY HONEST—becomes too deeply involved, or the speculation for their mutual benefit fails, or non-payment would indicate great financial ability and "remunerate handsomely," he suddenly loses control of his wife's purse and hand, secretly persuades her to claim her rights, to be obstinate in resisting his public entreaties in behalf of his



defrauded creditors, and thereby makes the good-woman an aider and abettor of his fraud. The Law is successful—the property is retained in the wife's possession for her benefit, the benefit of her rascally husband, and their children; *but has not the fraud, suggested and consummated by the Law, injured to an equal extent, THE WIFE AND CHILDREN OF THE DEFRAUDED PARTY?*

Thus, you perceive “The Woman's Law” rarely benefits good women, and may frequently be the means of involving them in dishonour; and that it generally benefits only the Amazon wife, or the rascally husband—the one a hideous hypertrophy—the other a miserable wretch who can live in luxury, and meet, without fear, and without a blush; who does not even permit his children, begotten by a rogue, born of a rogue, and reared in roguery, to associate with the honest man and the honest wife and children his depravity has kept in, or reduced to, poverty.

Another evil effect of this law is, recklessness in marrying. A fascinating, apparently amiable, “whole-soul,” “hail-fellow-well-met,” visits a girl possessed of some property, and renders himself agreeable to her. She likes him better than any other suitor; loves him somewhat; thinks she loves him well enough to marry him; never doubts that this careless, “warm-hearted,” popular fellow, *who doesn't love money at all*, will love and cherish her. She regards his inability to make a support, and his ability to spend money, as the only objection to their union of hands and their union of hearts; reflects that “The Woman's Law” removes this objection, and consents to tie herself to him by the indissoluble bond.



*Poor, inexperienced girl! By the time she becomes the mother of sundry infantile dependants upon her maternal solicitude, she discovers that any law can be easily evaded; that the law which seduced her into marriage with a spendthrift does not prevent that spendthrift's family from becoming bankrupt; and that of all the men who tread the green earth, your popular, “whole-soul,” “good-natured,” “generous,” smiling, self-indulgent man, whitened with only a coating of surface-amiability, is the most diabolically and hopelessly selfish.*

The positions above assumed, might, we think, be demonstrated by facts drawn from the legal archives of Mississippi and Louisiana. Reference to the same records would also exhibit a large increase of family dissensions, divorces, and “grass widows.” But I prefer for the present to rest the argument upon general principles, believing that reflection will teach men possessing common sense that every army should have a commander-in-chief, every monarchy a monarch, every republic a president, every family a head; that Nature and Revelation designate man as the head of the family, and that the tendency of the woman's law is to dethrone him, to derange the family government, and consequently to injure the family and society.

## WHAT GOD IS.

GOD is a glorious reality. As, however, the finite cannot comprehend infinitude, man's views of the Deity must be partial. And these partial glances at the Infinite are apt to beget in the mind an incorrect ideal of Him—the incorrectness being in proportion to the moral obliquity, mental deficiency, or improper education of the observer.

Each man's God is his Ideal of the greatest, wisest, best of beings; this ideal being almost universally a rectified and enlarged personification of himself. Some good persons are even afraid to do their Creator this justice. They say it is not right to judge the Infinite by their finite selves; and searching by the light of this *ignis fatuus*, they catch glimpses of the Devil and mistake him for God. Such are those who attribute to "our Father who art in Heaven," to OMNISCIENCE, irascibility, petulance, snappishness, revenge, cruelty.

We cannot see the whole of God, but our miniature ideal of Him should be perfect.



## THE TEN COMMANDMENTS.

I DEFY any mathematician or metaphysician to make any calculation, or construct any argument by which he can, even on the admission that there is no future state of existence, make it appear reasonable that a violation of the moral law, as

contained in the Ten Commandments, can, in any imaginable circumstances incident to human life, benefit the violator ; or, in other words, to show a probability that the product of an intelligent obedience to them can be anything but happiness.



# FINIS.

To dream of doing good is pleasant. The effort to do good is a rill of enjoyment flowing to the heart. I have thus dreamed—I have made such an effort—I have had my reward. But if, in the coming time, or the illimitable hereafter, I should discover that I have suggested a good thought to any human being ; shown the right path to any bewildered traveller ; soothed the melancholy of any despairing unbeliever ; cheered the slowly moving hours of any sufferer ; taught a loftier courage to any man ; inspired any feeble woman, wavering amid the temptations, the vanities, the vices of society, with a profounder antipathy to the sin of sins, the sin against her sex ; stimulated any husband to the exhibition of more love and tenderness for the wife of his bosom ; excited a greater hatred to sectionalism in the heart of any patriot ; or, above all, prevented any youthful pilgrim tottering in the dark, along the slippery, jagged edges of life's precipice, from taking the first false step ; or persuaded any careless parent to watch his children as the miser does his purse ; to study their infantile hearts and minds ; to love these household joys, and manifest this love by affectionate deeds appreciable by them ; to

seek their true interests, and so to educate as to mature them into useful men and women, capable of happiness in any conceivable contingency, I shall be more than compensated: the river of fruition will overflow my soul with its electrifying ecstasies.

THE END.

1874













